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IDEALS MADE REAL

A ROMANCE

GEORGE L. RAYMOND

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IDEALS MADE REAL.

It seemed a rare and royal friendship, ours,
The very sovereignty of sympathy;
Begun so early too, mere lads you know;
And now I never look back there again
But, swept like shading from a hero's face
In pictures, — those of Rembrandt, — all the school
Appear in hues of dim uncertainty
Surrounding Elbert, shining in relief.

Nor strange was it; too tender were my moods;
Nor oft had felt a touch save that of age
My traits all moulding to its own conceits.
For this, from contact kept with boys at play,
Till sensitive and shrinking as a girl,
A hint of sympathy could master me.
Not once, while waiting for her wedding day,
Could maiden's heart more hopeful beat than mine
To school-life looking forward. Reaching it,
Not often could a bride a Blue-beard find
To so disturb the trust of her romance.

At first, they lodged me there with such a loon!
"Our clown," so said the boys; and clown he
was;
Would tease all day, and tumble round all night;

And every morning, sure as came the sun,
Would start and rout me out, a huge wet towel
Snap like a coach whip round my dancing shape,
Well put to blush until I dodged away.

A chum had Elbert too, much like my own,
A wild boy caged, to seem more wild betimes
Through beating at his bars, a hapless wretch.
And when our happier love had flowered in us,
Half pitying each other, half this chum,
And more to pity, we stood round, well pleased,
To note his own wild set inflating him
With largest fancy for a freer fate;
For, by as much the better bubble he,
By so much might the lesser breeze have power
To blow him from us! Then, at last, our chance:
A gust of scolding struck him, and he went.
In other words, some mission mouthed for him, —
An inn-clerk's so I think, — he bowed content
Like Paul to fall, let down, one gloomy night,
From out the window of his room; while we,
Much giggling, flung his luggage after him.

My friend, thus widowed, caused that our school's
head
Already nodding o'er his noonday pipe,
Should beck his severed dreams with one nod
more,
And so consent to ours.
Thus room-mates made,
We slammed his door and woke him; not our-
selves.
Our dreamland lasted, that is with ourselves.
With others — well, you know boy-friends are shy.

A trait is it, this shielding of their hearts,
That fits for life-tilts ? — It was comical,
With others near, our blustering, each to each.
In truth, each seemed to wear his nature's coat
The soft side inward, comforting himself,
The coarse alone turned outward toward the world.
If strangers chafed against it, self did not,
Nor once its friend.
His cloak of caution loosed,
No mortal had convinced me in those days
That Elbert's peer had lived. What seemed in him
So mild, so beautiful, was more than marks
Mere difference between a porcupine
Provoked and peaceable. The kind was new;
Not human, so angelic. Ay, his soul,
As pure as loving, and as fine as frank,
I half believe to-day, as I did then,
Stood strange amid his comrades of the play
As dogwood, wedded to the skies of spring,
White in a wilderness of wintry pines.
Ah me, could all find all on earth so dear,
Christ's work were common. I had died for him.
In fact, that very fate to save the rogue
I just escaped, a score of times or more,
Blufft, bruised, or battling for him on the green.

Our love continued, long as school-days there.
And longer afterwards its smouldering fires
Were fed by letters, and rekindled oft
By friction of a frequent intercourse
Through visits in vacations; these gone by,
There still remained behind a lingering light
Pervading moods of memory like the rays

Poured through a prism, with all the commonest hues
Sprayed to uncommon colors where they broke.
In truth, I never see to-day a face
Where flash the kindling feelings of a boy,
But back of it, I seem to feel the warmth
Of Elbert's heart. No school-child past me bounds
But his dear presence seems to leap the years,
And rush on recollection, with a force
To start from depths of joy, stilled long ago,
A spray as fresh as dashed from them when first
They streamed in cataracts. With love like this
To flood its brim, my soul so full appeared
That, overflowing at each human touch,
Its pleasures could not stagnate.
But, you know,
The prey of changing skies men are; in drought
The old springs fail; and long we lived apart.

Then Elbert, when we met, talked much of this:
How, all its chairs made vacant one by one,
Applause rose thinner at his bachelor-club;
How, brief as birds', are human mating-times;
How men, mere songs forgot, withdraw to nests —
To homes — their worlds, where all the sky is filled
With woman's sunny smiles and shadowy locks.
How sweet were life thus shaded! Ah, how rich,
With earlier ardor of the season sped,
Should ripen round its prime love's ruddy fruit,
And vie with autumn frost the vines to flush!

"We, Norman," said he, "were contented once;
We two, we only; but we men must part;

And I confess now, in this general glow,
I feel as chill, and lone, and out of place,
As one last dew-drop, prisoned in a shade
Of universal noon."
"The sun," said I,
"Will free it, by and by. Our time will come."

"Must come," replied he; "or I go to it.
Henceforth, wherever beauty beams for me,
Not I shall shun it, as has been my wont;
But hold my eyes, a sun-glass for the rays;
And let them burn me."
"May they burn," I cried,
"Until love's fragrant opiate fume so strong
It make your brain beclouded as a Turk's.
For me, alas, though wild o'er many a maid,
I ne'er was mad enough to marry her."

"You poets," laughed he, "soar above so far,
The common clouds of earth can reach you not. —
Though love, my man, is not a smouldering fire,
Except when slight. When strong, the flame is
clear."

"So clear must mine be," said I, "that it show
Some mind to match a man's for sympathy.
Till then, must memory, jealous of her own,
Out-bid love's hope that cannot promise more."

"But maidens are not men, nor loved as men.
Bind beauty to their souls, then weigh the twain.
Or else? weigh nothing? — where is judgment
then?
We must be practical."

Thus Elbert spoke,
While I, for whom this unforetokened mien
Across his soul had swept, a slightest cloud
Not tokening the storm to rage anon,
Smiled only, thinking how, where throbbed his heart,
Some maid unnamed must surely stand and knock;
Though this I had forgotten, save for that
Which happened later. You shall hear of it.

It came in Dresden; since my new designs,
Perhaps, a year. It seemed a sudden turn,
To change my life-work; but the grief was deep.
With parents and estate so swept away,
The blows had stunned me, and I could not think.
Words seemed but mockery; I could not write.

Besides — no myth was it; I felt it all —
One time, when, lonely, I had knelt to Christ,
I seemed to rise not lonely; I was his;
He mine. I vowed to live then but for Him;
To break away from every cord of Earth,
And make my life accordant with his own.
Not only would I do the good; but yield
Each grain in all my being unto good,
And sow in wildest wastes, where all should germ
In generations growing up to heaven.

But yet, a novice still, though, like Saint Paul,
To will was present with me, to perform
I found not how; but, on performance bent,
Within the chancel chanting with the choir,
I stood before the altar, half the day,

And half before my books, with cravings pale
For high church, stole, and sermons of my own.

Then was it Elbert's friendship furthered me.
For finding me, and staring at my face,
And books, and cassock; when the puzzle passed,
He, humbling to my humor, praised the priest
And all the powers of priesthood, till delight
Relaxed the rigor of my rôle; and then
He wedged the wisdom of his own desire
Within my dreams, and broke apart their spell,
And drew aside the curtains of their couch,
And spoke of dawn, and light for all the world.

"First learn about this world," he urged, "and then
Learn how to help it. Surely minds like mine
Should teach, revise, reform, an impulse start,
Full counteracting false philosophy.
Here loomed an aim worth study! And for this
Why, now, not cross the sea? — His purse was mine.
And go you named a student," Elbert said,
"Nor clad so like a priest, for whom all earth
Shall don some Sabbath day demean; go free
To find the man, hard by his work, at home."
Thus pleading many days, at last he won;
And yielding to his wish, the sea I crossed.

There, borne to Dresden for a leisure month,
With whom, one morning, should I chance to meet
But Elbert's eldest sister, grown quite staid
And matronly withal, a second wife,

In charge of half a dozen sturdy boys;
Though these I saw not then; but all alone,
Much flushed and flurried, sweeping up the street,
She stopped, and cried abruptly, "Why, my friend,
Our Norman, you here? — what? — where from? — how long? —
Not heard of you for years! That Elbert, drone,
Will never write the news. So glad I am —
The very soul we needed! Here, move quick! —
Two friends have come there, by the morning train —
Their luggage lost — my laggard husband too. —
The hour, so early! — Such a mass of men!
And did you note the statues in Berlin,
In all the streets? — of warriors. every one!
And these two girls, here traveling, by themselves,
Where might makes right, and woman slighted is,
Not strange that toward you men their feelings oft,
In heat of indignation seething up,
Should yield some slender scum of bitterness!"

Thus led she, rattling on, my thoughts meanwhile
Confused as warrior's at the morning drum,
Till came a sight supreme, full rousing me: —
Two bright eyes only, sparkling in the light
Where flushed a face that flared then hid itself
Behind a traveling hood, some flecked with dust,
And fringed with venturous locks of careless hair.

"I have them now," it cried, and straight began
A tale, strained sweetly through those lips aglow

As sunset music. Then, when all was told,
The name I heard was "Edith."
Bowing low,
"Well done," essayed I, "well done as a man."

"As well," laughed Elbert's sister, "as you
speak!"
Then Edith, echoing after, naively dropt
"I tell you — nay — I will not say it though."

"Please, do?" I ventured.
"Nay; it may offend,"
Replied she; while her slender shoulders
shrugged —
Ah me, two doors, so sweet, about a heart
That love seemed dared to open!
"Nay," I said,
"I vow you such a deal of patience now!"

"I do not know," she answered; "am not sure.
Your manly patience might break loose to sigh
More hints about my manhood! Just to think,
Full half of all humanity, mere girls;
No force to aid themselves; no thought, no tact."

"I beg," I said; "not so; but commonly" —

"Ah, commonly; and what is this," she asked,
"That men-minds do so well? — discriminate?
Yet even I, dull woman, I can see
Brains differ in their grain. Alas for man,
With so much matter in his own brain lodged,
That mind he weighs like matter, in the mass;
And classes character, as one might clay.

This forms a man, — all wisdom, firmness, power;
And that, a woman, — foolish, fickle, frail;
And so — well, well, not wholly safe, forsooth,
Except subjected, eh? to man, her lord!"

"Ah but," said I, "we men, we prize you so!
To hold you ours, our pride seems infinite.
So lifted up, your fault alone it is
If we do seem lords."
"Seem or are?" she asked,
"Or have you lords so long seemed that you think
Your lording over us hath habits trained
That still need lording over? Fashion holds
That men need freedom; women, forms to bind.
Why this? Have both not souls? Aspire not both?
Must one class only live as slaves to sex? —
A woman's soul, I think, as well as man's,
May show some mastery over its abode."

"But yet," I said, "you know, her frame divine —
And soul, too — men confuse things — who can tell
Which is the soul?"
She answered absently,
"In truth you do confuse things! only wise,
As owls that blink at light, too blind to see
What day dawns with a wife's enfranchisement;
Ambitious, but forgetful that the meek
Inherit heaven; or that the oppressor dwarfs
His own surroundings; that one's pride must stoop,
Or else his soul; that earthly lords must bend,
And lift their consorts to their own prized seats,
As equals, queens, or else must house with slaves,
And take on slavish habits of their homes."

"Well said!" I thought, "well said! a maid of worth.
Despite her protests, a right manly mood."
And, as with manhood, so my thought unsheathed
To wait a chance to test her further still. —

And just then Elbert's sister, hurrying back
With Alice, Edith's sister, whom she fetched,
Cried, halfway introducing us, "My fan!"

I stooped, and picked it up. Then, bowing low,
"Your humble slave," I said. "You know, some claim,
Real friends, of either sex, live always slaves.
Sheer want of love a master's whip would snatch
And, snapping it, cry out, 'This way — serve me!'"

"And so," said Edith, reddening at this,
"I seem all loveless! You may mourn it less
That yonder carriage waits me. For to-day,
All thanks for coming. We may meet once more."

What would I not have given to have her know
I meant no rudeness? Elbert's sister laughed,
And, walking homeward then, kept bantering me,
My heart to storm with courage womanly,
So sure that love of sex sways all us men.
"So fortunate! — The very chance for me! —
No escort! — all alone! — no rivals near! —
And I must visit them this very eve."

"Ah, but my plans," I said. —

"Yes, yes; your plans;
You serve ideals, like all idiots.

But you are more, much more than out your teens;
And — well, you are no hermit, any way."

"Then must I find" — I laughed, yet earnest half —
"The charms to tempt me!" and my reckoning
Filled all my fingers doubly with the traits
Of perfect womanhood.
"She owns," she said,
"All these, and more. For once, my poet, dream;
And full Elysium waits you when you wake.
But mind you, Norman, minds like these complete,
In whose one person love so womanly
With intellect so manly has been wed,
Need not to marry for a hand or head.
There, hearts alone can win. Bear this in mind;
And fan your fancy till your words grow warm,
Ay, glow to flash the white heat of the soul!"
Then, crying from her door, "Farewell till eve,"
True to her sex, unanswered yet assured,
The woman left.
And I, well I was caught;
The net so deftly drawn, I floundered first;
Then, resting, smiled. We fight the hydra, man,
Who war against our nature. Every head
That reason clove would rise redoubled there.
Forsooth, my rudeness, it must be explained:
Which done, one visit surely would suffice.
If two, some good religious might result;
Much good, sighed zeal, too warm by more than half;

Then roused sweet echoes of faint hints, recalled
From sources churchly, of one's need to wed,
Like me, who else lived lone in lonely walks.
Thus, like two cowards, clinging each to each,
Weak wish nudged wisdom, and weak wisdom wish.
Who gets on better?
So that night we went.
And, all the way, my gay guide railed at me.
"Aha, my bachelor, your roving love,
Aha, has had its day! yon sunset-hues
But deck the curtains hung before its night."

"Alas," I cried. "if I must through them pass,
Woe me who wish it! See, this side of them,
The river in the horizon underneath."

"Your Jordan, ere your promised land," she said;
"You need baptizing for your hardened heart."

"Ah me!" I sighed, yet strangely; for there seemed,
While all the way the twilight thicker sank,
Sweet silence settling down o'er rival birds
Until the reverent air lay hushed to heed
The hallowing influence of holier stars.
And, all the way, deep folding round my soul,
With every nerve vibrating at its touch,
Fell dim delight, through which, as through a veil,
Some nearer presence breathed of holier life.
Ah, wandering heart, and had I had my day?
Its closing gates as golden as yon west?

And whither in the dark? — who knows? who
cares?
On, through the twilight threshold, trustingly!
What hast thou, night, that weary souls should
fear?
Thou home of love entranced, thou haunt of
dreams,
Thy halls alone can hoard the truth of heaven!
Thy dome alone far stretch to meet the stars!

She roused me, crying out, "Look there, the
porch!"
I looked, and there beheld our waiting friends.
About them grouped some ruddy German maids
With deeper hues but served to finely shade
The subtiler beauty of these two. Ah me,
They came from out that western world wherein,
By fresher breezes and by brighter suns,
The Saxon substance, sweetened and refined,
Each year assumes a more ethereal form.

Then these two, moving from the circling maids,
Like petals loosened from a rose in bloom,
Came forth to welcome us; and, greetings o'er,
Of Europe, Edith spoke, and Germany,
And books, and music — "how the church of
Greece
Earth's pivot showed that all earth whirls upon
Within the center of a flagstone round
That paves its chapel in Jerusalem.
But she, who tracked that viewless whirl by
sound,
And deemed all harmony to center here,
A Grecian only in her love of art,
Had found that pivot fixed in Germany."

"A Grecian truly!" Elbert's sister cried;
"Each morning brings her fresh from shrines of
art,
All flushed, a priestess from an oracle,
To sanctify us grosser mortals here
With hints so vague! such muttered mysteries!
Ah me, to hear her rave once!"
Edith smiled,
"And blest the eyes that see now! which sees
most,
Mere worship, or mere wonder? Know you, sir,"—
She paused and added then, — "this critic's
ground: —
The Sistine Babe it was, we spoke of Him:
Because I find art's glass, when rightly held,
Revealing through the real the truth ideal,
I said, 'I seemed to see not only Him,
The Babe, but back of Him, His heavenly home,
And this to enter, like a handmaid there,
And there commune until my soul was blest.'
I said, 'My spirit thence appeared to come,
My arms the throne, my breast the couch of Christ.
If so,' I asked, 'what art had wrought for me?
Did any soul transmigrate after death?
I knew a power bade mine transmigrate here.'
For this, you hear of raving. What the harm? —
The soul of feeling is in thought, not so?
Then one, to feel refreshed, must think she bathes
In rills that reach her from the freshest springs."

"You know," said Elbert's sister, soothingly,
"Our soaring lark here bathes in every pool.
So be not frightened off; her plumes but shake
A sprinkling from the bath they felt to-day."

"Some all would please," said Edith; "I, myself;
My soul, I mean; and would not clip that soul
To suit mere worldling's notions. Courting crowds,
A soul lives cramped; but if one speak the truth,
Crowds leave —— good riddance! — space is cleared for friends."

"Cleared verily!" the other cried; "Long live
These pet penates of our modern homes,
These sprites to fright the stranger! — Own it now,
The fear you felt. It would appease her so!"

On Edith's trembling lip, my gaze descried,
The while no answer came, the slightest wave,
Coursed there from far off trouble underneath.
"Not understood by these," I thought; and straight —
You know no man can flinch it: woman's grief,
If any manhood still be left in him,
Will rouse his efforts to bespeak her peace. —
I found myself her soul's expositor
To clear the channel of its overflow.

"And when the thought is in one, when it springs,
Why, then, not let it spring? Such thronged ideas
The world has not, that it can spare our own.
And if we startle folks; of their deceit
Jog off the guise, we spy them as they are.
Between souls thus discovered, deems our friend,
True love must flow; while friendship gained by craft

Is lost by confidence. I think her right.
Why not? we all of us, in noblest moods,
Crave homage for a noble soul within.
Who knows this soul, save while we speak the truth?
Did not divine hands form us as we are?
Who love us as we are, love higher things
Than they who love what earth would make of us."

"My champion!" Edith cried; and drawing near,
With white sleeves fluttering from her shapely sides —
Ah soul, were she a winged one sent to save
She scarce had in me stirred a greater joy.

My mien must have revealed it. Like a lake
When fogs uplift, to greet my sympathy,
Anon her spirit's crystal depth appeared,
And lo, reflected thence from all her moods,
I seemed to face, at every turn, my own.

So new such visions then, as thrilled I felt,
As feels the savage maid who first descries
Her own face staring from a stranger's glass,
Then spell-bound lingers, learning of herself.
So wrapt, my wonder hung, all wistfully,
About that spirit bright. What meant it all?
I could not then believe, I scout it yet,
That mortals can afford to slight the souls
Reflecting theirs, to make them mind themselves
And prize the good they own, and dread the ill.

You smile, friend : ah ; and often so would I.
My head would oft, made jealous of my heart,
Deny all reason in my impulses.
And oft my heart, to bear such weight of joy,
Would faint from too much feeling. I would ask
Could I be sane yet feel a life so sweet ? —
At least I would be sure ; so like a friend
Who finds a long lost friend amid a crowd,
And stares, and holds him at arm's length, a time,
Ere clasping him with courage to his breast
That well-nigh bursts the while, I held her off,
This long sought soul that mine had found a friend ;
And did not dare to trust her as I would.

What struggles then were mine ! Too cautious there
To dare in even love to risk a fall,
Ah, how I braced my powers against a force
That might unbalance me ! My will resolved,
How mastered it my too reluctant mien !
How stiffened every smile ! Ay, ay, when love,
Too strong, would conquer, how I thwarted it, —
Each glance that could reveal one glimpse of it
First turning toward her sister, not toward her ;
Unconscious Edith ! — was it all deceit ? —
I dared not otherwise. How could I else,
Poor fool, that then I felt myself to be,
Hide my infatuation ! —
What of her ? —
How could she know me when I masked myself ?
Did not her sister seem to please me most ?
Did not my Edith please most, pleasing her ?

And so for Alice only seemed her care;
Woe me, for Alice, fair and flippant naught,
An empty echo only of my love.
The sweetness of the family all was spent
To fill the elder Edith.
How I felt,
Kept back from moonlight strolls for Alice there;
And jogged from tête-à-têtes to give her place;
Then with her left, inspired alone to wish
To be like her a dunce; and thus to be
Like her, in some way, Edith's all-in-all.

And could I hint this fact to Edith? nay.
Unselfish, all ethereal in her thought,
A disembodied soul held moods as few
Touched through the senses. One as soon, had snared
With tattered nets of tow a wind of spring;
Or with his own breath warmed the wintry air.
Her love's attention, no way, could be drawn.
At times, I would essay philosophy;
Her fancy argue down; or facts rehearse.
Like merest sand, flung off a nervous bird,
My pleas were shaken back.
She "There," would cry;
"Some everlasting everybody's law
Applied again to me! Nay, nay, this world
Would grind one's very soul to common dust!"

"And what else are we," once I turned to ask;
"Would God we all from laws could free ourselves,
But half our lives we spend in learning them;
The other half in learning them to love.

And but in souls that learn life's laws by heart,
Has wisdom, so it seems, a sway complete."

"Nay, nay; not earthly wisdom! nay," she cried,
"For earth is swayed by folly; folly's self,
But wisdom fettered! You live you its slave,
But me leave free!" And while she moved away, —
"You lawless," sighed I, "shall you always prove
The water Undine of my wilderness,
All maddening, with strange metamorphoses,
My faint love thirsting to refresh itself?" —

Oft while I mooted this, she changed and seemed
A fount of laughter now that sprang within,
Rushed through her lips and rippled round her guise,
The very train's hem shaking by the flow.
Nay, nay, but I shall trust you yet, I thought;
To but believe you good, shall hold it true
That maids, like minnows, seldom show themselves
Till, caught and drawn from out the open seas,
They frisk, all safe, within some household pond!

Thus thought moved on, the old way, yet so strange;
For life a balance is of contraries:
Its every pulse that proves we live must beat
With deathlike stillness swift alternating.
One hour my faith in her in sunlight walked,
The next came doubt as lightless as the night.
All prefaced fitly that which you shall hear.

I once had been recalling much of youth,
Of Elbert; how, fulfilling plans of old,
He soon should join me here in Germany.

"Why Edith," Alice cried, "that must be ours,
Our Elbert."
"Yours?" I asked.
"Ours," Edith said,
"Ay, ay; our families have been friends for years."
But spite her careless tone, her eyes appeared,
Slipping through lashes long, to shun my own.

My sharp look, did it cut through hers that flushed?
What meant the flush? — I thought of Elbert then;
His later moods had trailed a glamour strange
Of witchery somewhere — Could it be that she, —
My Edith, she was his? — And he, my friend,
Was he the one then that her love had caged,
And placed it where my effort reaching forth
Could touch but bars of chill indifference? —
Of these two sisters daring not to ask,
Of Elbert's now, I could not. In the week
When first we met, had tidings called her home.
But soon, like worms that would not wait for death,
Fear-fretted jealousies clung round the form
Of hope expiring, yet to prize her more
To feel that Elbert too had prized her so.

In two days after that, he on us burst,
While all were met, and brought a sudden light

Illuminating her, and paling me,
Blanched, ash-like all, when came so hot a flush
As warmed her welcome. Ah, my heart and breath
In silence seemed to sink, like buzzing bees
When Autumn steals the sunlight from the flowers,
And frost seals down their sweets. I heard them talk
Like one who just has walked a glacier-path
With boistrous friends; then, stumbling, slips away,
Far sucked through freezing fathoms down to hell,
Yet hears the cruel laughter crackling still.

This scarce prepared my thought for Elbert's glee,
When then the sisters left. "Aha, good friend,
So glad to see you! Such a desert life!
And friendship, such an oasis! — Your health!
First clear a dusty throat, and then, my boy,
With deeper draughts we clear our dusty souls."

Thus swept he, hurrying on from thought to thought,
Yet found no breath to spare the sisters here.
Why not? Could not he trust so old a friend? —
Half anxious then, half curious to detect,
Though wary still of love so subtle all,
My lips, bold-braced yet trembling at the deed,
Essayed a note to touch him, — Edith's praise.

"She looks well," said he, somewhat absently.

"She looks well!" cried I, half-way nettled now;
Forsooth, should Edith be abused to show
What brutes are men who lose their trust! "She looks —
For what then do you take her? for a frame
Whose empty effigy of human shape
Well fits some shopman's wares of vanity? —
Her soul is what I spoke of, soul I mean."

"Her soul?" he said; "may be; but I, may be,
Have never seen it."
"How? — this too!" I thought,
"A slight is it? — or triumph that he vaunts?"

He caught my feeling from my fevered mien,
And more from words confused; and, warming then,
Made answer, "Norman, loved I you but less,
I more might love, and more might spare myself.
The thing my sister wrote, I deemed her whim;
Could not conceive; and can it yet be true? —
I swear, it staggers half one's faith to find
A man, devoted to the things you claim,
So little circumspect."
What meant he now?
Could he believe me capable of this, —
To woo his Edith, knowing she was his? —
Could all my sleepless nights, my troubled heart,
My prayerful deeds, my nature known of old,
Be so misjudged, and yet no fault in him? —
"So little circumspect in what?" I asked.

And then with words that could but anger me,
"In what but choice of company?" he said;
"No more you think of study, duty, church,

The whole day long you waste with one like this! —
Nay, check me not. I understand my words, —
This actress, though right artless in her way,
This actress here, would play " —
" With me! " I cried;
" This 'actress!' " and I know not what I said;
But yet recall what kept him forcing in,
" You err! " — " You do me wrong! " — " You
know her not! " —
Wild words, the which he ended saying then,
" Not such am I as you profess to be;
But had you common sense, no piety,
You might perceive a farce, if not a fault.
A broad church yours were surely! — Humph! —
Your mate,
Attracting toward the stage by charms you lacked,
Would draw the sinners out, while you the
saints."

Struck blind, I scarcely could have felt more
stunned.
Was this the truth? An actress was she then?
Why had not Elbert's sister told me this? —

" Not told you this? " cried Elbert; " what? —
not told? —
Ay, ay, I see. — She hoped that love, perchance —
It is a woman's balm for every ill —
Might Edith from her present calling woo.
She knows her not! — And did not you explain,
She knew not you, your plans."
" But Edith knew,"
I answered back; and then, I checked myself.
Had not she blushed to hear that Elbert came? —
For fear, was it, lest he the truth should tell?

Tell me, her friend? tell me, deceived, her dupe?
Tell me, whose love she might have known, yet knew
That all she seemed to me was not her all? —
Alas, could love so questioning bear the strain,
Pure love? — Those watching by the death-bed note
That souls, just dying, ere above they spring,
Breathe deep, then pass away. And so with minds,
When comes the deadliest woe. Down deep in thought,
I scarce had deemed that aught from hell could roil
Such dregs of bitterness long undisturbed.

The fault, sighed conscience, had been all my own:
How safely might one sail this sea of life
If all his reckonings faithful were to heaven!
Ah, siren-like, a rivaling earthly love
May lure to realms whose mountain heights are clouds,
Clouds warmly hued above a cold gray shoal
Whose only outlines are the breakers white,
Whose only stir, the fury of the storm.
And I, now finding out the truth, what now? —
Should I turn back to aims I knew were safe? —
I rose to do it; yet, I thought, and thrilled,
Could I her soul but hold, but own herself,
Though wrecked and ruined, yet the gain were sweet. —
Sweet, sweet, beyond my wreck? Then why not more,
This side of it? Did I in God believe? —

That He a life could change, through human
means ?
Did not her life need changing? — What were I
But faithless wholly, would I try it not?

So soon, her thought to draw out, baiting mine,
Some slur I dropped, suggested by a church.
It joined a theatre. "Extremes," I said,
"Have met."
"Extremes," she said, "have met before!
I know your meaning. Elbert has disclosed —
Nay, not the thing I am, but seem to be
To those who will not view me as I am.
You join their lists? — I hoped for better things."

"But was it right to keep me ignorant?"

"I hoped it right," she said, "to keep you wise.
What Elbert thought, I knew. With you, some
hope
That she who should not seem so wholly wrong
Might better represent a class unknown."

"Without design, might represent amiss,"
I answered. "As for you, however classed,
No class, I fear, could claim you, all in all.
For all rules have exceptions."
"Take but rules
For this time," said she. "Did you ever note
That ever, when the seers their heaven descry,
They view a pulpit? — Nay, to me it seems
They view a stage with galleries bright around,
All thronged with white robed hosts attendant
there.
If so, why then the stage may hint of good."

"It may," I said, "but does it, as a rule?"

"Ah, as a rule," she said, "it hints of life."

"But mainly life to laugh at or to fear,"
I urged.
"Our natures need to laugh and shrink,"
She said, "or life would stagnate. As for art,
Success must image there the life that is.
And life that is, remember, is the truth.
So many times my father spoke of this:
'Of truth we read who spell from nature's page,
And artists best detect the meaning there,
Their fancy using like a glass to find
The infinite force within the finite fact.
When taught by them it is earth learns at last
Through every form to read of thought behind.
Here moves a man, you say. What see you? —
man? —
Nay, nay; that guise material fashions there
The image only of his manliness.
And you, imagining from this imagery
The mood unseen, thus only know the mood.
Yon little girl that skips beside the porch,
I know, I love her not, save when I pass
Behind that face to reach a region rare
Where dolls seem sentient babes, and brothers
kings.
And yonder maidens, musing in delight,
I know, I love not, till, in sacrifice,
My spirit seems to yield to their desires;
To wait a watchful servant unto them;
To move with motives that inspire their deeds;
To even gain through their own eyes their views,

And thrill with rhythm when their ear-drums
throb;
Then, joining all with all, imagine thus
Their hidden inner natures that control.
So too, through all of life — who more can
know? —
All things are fitful images alone,
Reflecting glory from the Absolute;
And he who can imagine from the part
What marks the whole, he walks in light of
heaven.
Find then a life where every child becomes
Earth's animated toy of manliness,
Each man the ore from which to mould a god,
And all earth's smouldering ore, heaven's flame
anon;
You find for mind a life worth living for,
A life the artist gives it: it is he
Discerns a Spirit always veiled in shape,
A soul in man, and reason everywhere.'"

Ah Edith, so I mused, an artist thou,
Thou art indeed! but not an actress, no,
Whatever may have trained thee, save to tread
The stage of truth! and Elbert's every act
Against my flinty confidence struck fire,
And flashed each time I met him now, anew;
The more so, that each time I met him now,
In earnest, or to make me more distrust,
He fluttered like her fan at Edith's side,
Her silence soothed with subtlest flattery,
Her vacant hours invaded with himself;
Ah me, and all my life one scheme became
To steal upon his absence, then to pluck
Love's fruit that once his presence brought alone.

And so, henceforth, I less could welcome him.
How could I do it, — with his views of her,
And so impelled? — Ah, half he made me doubt
If I could not mistake her, — doubt I checked;
Flushed fiercely soon that Elbert so could act
As it to hint. But when I spoke with him,
He laughed me off.
"Why, man, I like your friend,
And she likes me; and with the other sex
The more we like, sometimes, the less we love —
Or think we love. Do I deceive her then,
In showing friendliness? — Why think you so? —
Forsooth, if beauty pleases me, I smile.
If gracefulness beguile, I gaze at it.
If wisdom awe me, I am all respect.
Good art, I laud; with fancy, grow a poet;
And with emotion, an enthusiast.
What then? Am I thus proved a hypocrite? —
No sympathy is there, not personal?
All things we praise must we appropriate?
Is beauty such a flower, do you infer,
Or man so beastlike, having taste for it,
He needs must go and gorge it down? — Go to! —
I watch the fair thing; of its fragrance sniff;
Then leave for others. Edith knows this well,
For that, trust her."
But was it, as he claimed?
Were both so wise? — Or was it all some scheme
Of his acuteness, us to cut apart?
This seemed most like him, and most angered me.
Was I a boy that he should foil me thus?

Yet what to do? — The more I searched for it,
The more I saw but only one true course.
Our aims — my own and Edith's — differed much.
Yet felt I more than this. Our hearts were one
In all the love innate, inspiring aims.
Suppose our lives and thus our hearts were joined;
Could not my love and hers, together put,
Outweigh such aims as should be hers alone?
Why not have faith in love, mine joined with hers?
What power was stronger in the universe?
Why not have faith to trust this only soul
That ever I had met to whom my moods
Could all unroll, assured of insight there
To read them rightly — why it seemed decreed,
Her power to read my soul gave her the right
To know its love, whatever might be hers.
And were I but to speak the truth to her,
So tell her all, why fear this simple truth?
For I would say I loved, but not her aims.
If then she loved her aims still more than me,
It would be proof that she could love me not.
And if she loved me more than these, her aims,
It would be proof that hers could yield to mine.

So near the sunset of a summer's day,
And through the park there, walking toward the lake,
"I think," I breathed out cautiously, "to write
A story all of love; and I have planned
The plot to open here. In after time,
If interest it waken, some, perchance,
May love to linger here recalling it.

Look now — this lake. To gain the full effect
Of palace, park, and yonder heaven unveiled,
One, downward gazing, in the water's depth
Should note all, washed from gross reality,
And — as in art — reflected. With this view
This tale of mine shall open. First of all,
Here, in the sunshine nearest to our feet, —
Ay, in the water; ay, friend, here I mean, —
Just underneath us, — mark you, mark you, there,
The hero, and beside him, his ideal!"

And when she saw herself, "What? how?" she cried;
And then, all silent, stood. But I sped on,
Detailing all my plans and all my hopes,
How she, with soul so true and aims so high,
Might meet in them the mission meant for her, —
How earth's iniquity should be redeemed
Through sacrifice, the deeds of such as we.

Still stood she silent. Then I spoke again,
"But think not, Edith, for the plans alone
I plead with you. I plead too for myself;
The plans detailing that you know myself;
Yet holding not I stand above you, friend.
Nay, times are, I feel worthy scarce to touch
Your finger's tips, or upright stand and taint
The level of the air you breathe in; nay,
I would not judge your life; would only crave,
When we have so much else in sympathy,
That holy state where two souls, else at one,
Would both be God's. — Ah could you thus be mine?"

Her silence then was broken. "Friend, dear friend,
I might be proud, thus yours. Who could not find
All, meet for manhood, in your manliness?
But no, for you forgot — such different aims!
You never told me all these plans before.
And, Norman, now — no, no; for, through your church
That fanned some thought obscure there smouldering,
Some spark of doubt, to ardent heresy,
My father suffered; lost his honored name,
His living, all; nor hoarded scanty means
To leave his daughter ignorant of the cause.
And I? — no, no; it courses through my blood;
My tastes you but mistake. Our paths must branch;
I, live the minister of only art."

"But Edith," urged I, "truth may more include
Than most men deem who would deem all things theirs. —
Your tastes are not religious? — Mine are not,
If by religion you mean piety, —
Religion's scum that bubbles to be seen.
But how is it beneath the surface, friend?
Down deep within? — is not the substance there?
Ah, never did I seem religious more
Than when at one with you?"
She spoke alone
To tell me all: "her father's legacy
Had been her sister, whom she must not leave.
For her sake, seeking means of livelihood,

She first rejected, then accepted this.
And now, by truest love, was wed to it.
So too her sister; ay, for both of them
Each hope, each joy, each thought at all of life
Was bounded now by music, and the stage.
No use was it to offer proof to her:
Not logic leads the artist on, but light."

She spoke in vain — I could not give her up.
Next day I urged her, hoping her to swerve.
My slight of music, rousing her defense,
But proved how weak my love to rival it.
"My father oft," she said, "would quote your Book;
Say 'music marshaled all the better life.
What else could sway the soul, yet love leave free
To think, and choose, and do?' — and strains so sweet"
She added, while before us played the band,
"What different moods they move in different minds!
That maid may smile and sigh midst dreams of love;
Her dark attendant dream of but her gold:
That matron plan some fresh self-sacrifice;
And that spare fellow, twirling, near her side,
His shy mustache that shrinks behind his lips,
Plan only how to hide their stingy look.
And thus all listen, musing different things;
And all, with conscious freedom, musing thus;
And yet one harmony controls them all,
Aroused or calmed to match its changing flow.
What else but music frees the mind it rules?
'Good will to man,' was spoken first in song."

"Good will," I said, "but follows will for good."

"And will for good will come," she answered back.
"As in the older advent, so to-day,
Would I believe in power behind sweet song
To hold the universe in harmony,
Expelling evil and impelling good
Through all the limits of created life, —
A spirit's power! — What though we mortals here,
With eyes material, cannot scan its hosts?
They issue forth in forms that while they move
Awake around us echoes everywhere.
We start to spy them, but we find them not,
But just their rustle in the trees they pass;
Or where, with dash of water o'er the rocks,
They leave the sea or linger in the rill.
At times, they rest a moment on the earth,
With twilight languor, sighing gently then;
And lull to dreams, with tones in sympathy,
The lowly insect and the lowing herd.
At times, amid the winds that rise at morn,
They sweep along the land and startle sleep
From nervous birds that twitter through their track.
And, now and then, in clouds that close the sky,
They bound adown the rift the lightning cleaves
Till sunlight overhead pours through again.
A spirit's power has music; and must rule
Unrivaled still as far as sense can heed,
Or reason hark behind it. All the chords
Of all things true are tuned by hands divine,

And thrill to feel the touch! —
But sounds arise
In souls untuned, like harp-strings when they snap.
Things whir like midnight nothings to the sneak,
And fright like forests when the dark leaves blow
About the solitary murderer. —
And sweetest sounds to sweetest souls on earth
May bring but foretastes vague of harmony:
The school girl heeds her comrade's ringing laugh, —
Scarce more than tuning ere a chord is struck;
The maiden hears the lover's mellow tones, —
But only key-notes sounding for the whole;
The dame has voices sweet that cheer her home, —
And they perchance prelude the theme of heaven.
Ay, ay; and blows of toil and battle guns,
These too are drum-rolls of the bands that move
To meet the marshaled glories sure to come.
Ah me, we need but wait; we all must hear,
And all things music! far above at last,
Must hear the treble, thrilling down from heaven,
And concord space throughout, and trembling hell
But crashed to echo back its thundering bass."

So Edith spoke; while I, left lonely all,
Beheld her, ardent for her art, a cloud,
Aglow by dawn, then drawn away, away.

I said, I know not what; but far too proud,
Intoxicated though I was by love,
To let her view the folly of my fall,

I said not all I felt; but what I felt,
Beneath the first fierce humbling of the storm,
Floods over memory yet with half the woe
That overwhelmed me then. Am I, I thought,
So strong in love, and waiting long for it,
And always true, am I to be outweighed
By merest chaff of manhood, on the stage,
Or in the pit? I swore 't was always so
With all her sex. Worth never weighed a straw.
A very satyr could outwoo a sage. —
Weak woman! yet she must be weak — in brain
Or body. Let her first be weak in brain:
Some chance then she would serve a husband's thought!
Some chance that wisdom rule the family!
Or else, too strong of mind to serve his thought,
She otherwise would slave it. Brains to wed,
Commend one as a fool.
And then I stopped: —
Here raved I, jealous of this fool alone,
This coming clown. — I blushed to think of him. —
But what of her? — of Edith? — She should live,
Her figure robed to fascinate — ah — crowds!
The rabble should be ravished just forsooth
To clap with crazy hands the rarer air
In which she moved. For them, her voice should sound,
With slightest trills so swaying all their kind
That thronging cheers should thunder in response! —
Her face, so sweet, should plead till foulest souls
Should feel how pure the joys beyond their reach,
And long for things that never one could taint!

My sweet, sweet love! —
But ah, at Edith's side,
Should I be aught? — Alas, I could but seem —
Behind the gilded glory of the stage,
Behind the loud-mouthed suitors of the show,
Why, why, a dog, at some back door to wait,
With signaling bark to jar the echoes sweet
Of all-the-town's applause. She mine would be
But as the sun, when rests his flaming brow
Against the evening sea flushed far and near,
Is thine, O trembling spray-drop, dreaming it,
Since all his image glows within thy grasp! —
Fool, fool! yet dear, dear folly!
These my thoughts;
My words — all I recall now — came at last
When slowly sauntering back we reached her home.
"Would God," I sighed, "the time could come for us,
When, looking toward the future now so dark,
We two should need no more to say good-night."

"Good-bye," she said, and left me in the gloom.

Then was it, as I turned about, by chance,
I came on Elbert; and my whole soul surged
To dash at him its briny bitterness.
Is he here, thought I, he to whom, alas,
The very potion, poisoning all my hopes,
Shall foam, the sparkling nectar of success;
Ay, bring good cheer, though bringing death to me? —
Then let him share it! — Still, my wiser pride

The purpose checked, and balancing rash hate
With hateful prudence, met his open smile
But with a frown that closed, to greet him not.

With any truth to self, so argued I,
I could not do aught else ; nor could abide
A town that held them. So I left the town.
And so, at once, these foremost friends of life
And I had parted ; not as friends should part,
With all love's zenith fevered like the skies
Where eve has rent from them a glorious sun,
Then cooled anon with starlight sprinkled thick
Until the sun come back. We cracked apart,
Like ice-bergs drifting southward, joined no more,
And sunned alone as each shall melt away.

No use, it is ; I cannot now recall —
I would not if I could, my suffering.
From Elbert, best of friends, my nobler self,
My soul of virtue and my heart of love,
What cause could rightly tear me ? — Asking this,
My love rose up from reason to rebel ;
Indignant all to think a theory
Should dare to hold an innate impulse down ;
While will, caught there, between the heart and head,
Each charge would bear, and yet forbear to act.

And Edith, peerless Edith ! how I strove
To her forget ; and, striving evermore,
How fair her form, conjured by raving thought,
Would rise, a Venus o'er my sea of sighs,

Till I would hush, and seem to plead anon
That I who would forget, might be forgiven.
Then how would judgment tear her traits apart;
The petals pluck from each dear grace that
flowered;
And hope its naked stem some trace would show
Too void of beauty then to still suggest
The bloom and sweetness of the life I loved.
Alas, but while I wrought for this alone,
How would her virtues but the more unfold! —
Like God's own glory flowering in the skies,
And scanned by those who would not find it there,
But, when they test the stars, must deal with light.

I wrought and rested; it was all in vain.
My highest consolation was the hope
That hard earned sleep might hold me long in
dreams,
Where evermore my soul might with her dwell,
Though evermore each morning dawned more
lone.
Awake, asleep, throned constant o'er my heart,
I served this image all intangible,
This photographic fantasy of truth,
This fairy nothingness of vanished fact,
A shape to love, minute yet mighty still,
To sense but nothing, yet to spirit all.

Thus lived I, triumphed over; as the clouds
Whereon the sun sits throned, all bright are they,
And bright beneath them is the sunset sea.
In splendid serfdom to its love, my soul,
That shone with a kindred glory, thence beheld
A kindred glory shine on all about.

Nay, nay, no whim was this; it fills my creed:
The touch of all true love regenerates.
When born the lover, one is born anew;
And all his family of fancies then
Bear family traits: those loving and those not
Live wide apart as rainbows and the rain.
I might be superstitious, but to me
The temple of my life's experience
Had been less sacred, had it held no shrine
Whereon to place the offerings sweet of love.
And all things there more holy loomed around,
Illumed by holy lights of memory.

Nor long was it, ere all love drawing nigh,
Wherever aimed, I learned to appropriate.
When turned to all invoking sympathy,
My wishes wrought like witches, and conjured
The thing they wished for: sympathy would
come.

And so, my moods, thus moving on, at last
Found special pleasure in a friendship formed
Upon a day of tramping through the Alps.
Her name was Grace, and gracious was her mien;
And graces everywhere attended her
Through jars and joys of journeys afterward.
By far less splendid than my Edith was,
Less striking, less alluring, and less shunned:
Her brilliance would not dim a rival's eyes,
Nor fairness shade another's face with frowns.
One saw in her a modest, model maid,
A woman loved by women; and with men
A presence, mellow-lighting like the moon;

Yet bright, not always. When my storms came on,
As now they came on often, then it seemed
Her very mildness made her moods too dull
To penetrate the clouds that covered mine.

"It must be lonesome, very," would she sigh;
"A stranger-land indeed, for one like you!
What think you? day by day, could not we meet,—
Church people here? and live here, more at one?"

When hearts hold secrets, even love that comes,
And comes in crowds, will bring the prying soul
Intent to spring them open. How I shrank
To meet in such no depth of sympathy
Below the tongues and teeth and lips allied
To shape one shibboleth! But made to feel
Foretokened fate like this, I felt me faint;
Scarce more a soldier falling at his post,
With heart shelled out and emptied of his soul.
I could but find excuses, partly real
And partly feigned, the fringe of ready whims.

She startled echoes out my inmost soul
Through muttering of my "life-work."
"Yes," I said;
"All Christ's should sympathize. All own one lord;
All wait one shore beside; all watch one tide. —
So too do snipes and snails! so those decreed
To rule one town beyond it there, or ten.
Souls differ, Grace; and John from James, as well
As both from Judas. — Judas lingers too."

"So many," sighed she, "Christ's in name alone,
Absorbed in change of scene, or merely art!"

Regard for Edith, was it, that in me
Had roused at last a champion of art? —
"However or wherever plied," I said,
"Real power for good, enough good owns to claim
Some courtesy from Christian charity.
If I but fling this stone in yonder pond,
Small matter where it fall; the whole is ruffed.
So if one use religion here or art
The whole man he may move, and move for good."

"Ah, but," she breathed, with slight dogmatic stress,
"A simple woman, I would move the heart;
Through love, as Christ did too; not so?"
"Well, well,"
I said, "do this yourself; you own the right;
Ay, get it from your friends' self-consciousness.
But yet your question, — no, I dare not, no,
Not limit Him; not if the church speak true;
If He the Truth embodied with the Life;
If He were all in all, — his holiness,
His wholeness; and his perfectness, the proof
Of Godhead. — Nay, nor dare I limit those
Who follow where he leads. They His may live,
Not aiming here nor there, but everywhere
To make the most of all God meant them for.
And things there are that art can do for man
To make him manlier. Not the senseless rock
Is all it fashions into forms of sense;
But senseless manhood, natures hard and harsh,
Great classes crushed, and races forced to crawl

Till all their souls are stained with smut and soil,—
These, too, more human seem when hands of art
Have grasped their better traits and hold them forth.
Then earth that views in part these better traits,
In part the tender care that holds them forth,
Sees beauty where before no beauty seemed;
Until all hearts more kindly beat to heed
The lessons taught by man's Humanities.
And so I think, albeit the wilderness
Oftimes some John in camel's hair may need,
There open too, in walks of life less wild,
More ways where love may plead in guise more soft.
In short, so long as choice permitted is,
'T is best to do what one can do the best."

"Oh, you perplexing!" cried she; "not for me,
For *your* brain. Tell, pray, where it rummaged last,
To catch these cobwebs? — I have seen them, yes;
These halls are full of them, and libraries,
Old musty things! — But, Norman, soberly,
This German text is bad for eye-sight, yes;
And half I doubt — Come, tell me, tell the truth,
Do *you* see clearly aught that you can do?"

"Why so?" I asked; "do you?"
"Why not," she said,
All serious now, "do what shall yield life's day
The most of glory at its evening hour? —
And suns set brightest after days of storm."

"What always?" asked I, "are you sure of this? —
I know true faith that mainly aims to rid
Our present life from fear of future ill.
To it what need of storms, if sunshine here
May best prepare one for the future calm?
That calm eternal is; but, even so,
How judge we of the eternal, save by time?
What know we of enjoyment, ending not,
Beyond our own, if only made to last?
What know of being blessed, if not this, —
To find the process of becoming blest
Made permanent; faith's wings that falter here
Full fledged to fly by habit? — If so, what? —
Heaven's habits form like earth's. Suppose a youth
That, by and by, much wealth he may enjoy,
Act miserly. What gains he by and by? —
Much wealth, perhaps; but with it, holding still
His actions miserly, no more mere acts
But grown activities, established traits,
Incorporated modes of all his life;
With these he holds what most unfits his soul
To use wealth, or enjoy it. So on earth
If avarice, aimed for heaven, make man a monk,
What gains he by and by? — If monkish moods,
These grown activities, established traits,
Incorporated modes of all his life;
In holding these, his soul must with them hold
What most unfits it to enjoy — not here,
In any sphere at all, — a life of love."

"You surely would not mean," she asked and paused,

"That you could now forego your hopes? your vows?
Your life-work? — seek enjoyment?"
"Ah," said I,
"Enjoyment is the man's most genuine praise
To Him that framed his being. What should I,
A child of God, do here but live God's life? —
Which is not now, nor then, but evermore.
My soul must thrive the best, as best I make
My now, eternal; my eternal, now.
Thus moved, all blows, adverse to highest good,
I but resist; and, parrying off, grow strong.
And all the sunshine finds a welcome here;
And all my heart, thrown open, sweet is made.
Thus comprehending now, in present life,
God's comprehensiveness of great and small,
My heaven begun — why praise I not far more
Than can that slandering slattern of the soul,
Aceticism, shuffling toward far bliss,
Slip-shod and sniveling?" —
"Now, that goes too far!"
Cried Grace, "Am I thus? — what? — Ah, but I know
A man so moody! — Own it. Were I you,
I just would set to work. To work off whims
The best way, say they, is to work them out:
One hand at work is worth ten heads that shirk."

"Ah, I am moody!" sighed I; "you complain.
Moods seem not meet. Oh no; they prove we feel! —
Not pious: prove we think!"
Yet verily,

I could but blame myself; so fain to draw
This gentler soul from sweet, still streams of life
Toward waves so roughly dashed about my own!
You know though, how it is: our thought, like light,
Opposed, will vaunt itself; and brighest play,
Glanced off from things it does not penetrate.
So, less to sympathize with, than to shock,
My thought played round the surface of a life
Some cause had shaped to make so smooth a thing
I burned to warp it of complacency.
Oft, though unconscious of the least design,
I seemed to fall in fancied depths of woe,
And mock, that I might hear her call me thence:
Ay, learned therein some envy toward the rake.
For what a charm it were to hear, — not so?
That is if one were vicious, through and through, —
Such pleas for love from lips that aye were pure?
The very depth of one's unworthiness
Made possibility of worth so sweet!

But weeks and months passed by, in which she filled
A certain void in life; and, every eve,
We seemed to meet, to meet the more, old friends.
Once, ending thus the labors of the day,
We chanced upon a way where, sauntering too,
Lo, Elbert entered to encounter us.

At first scarce friendly, after divers tests,
And in the new light of my life with her,
His older love returned with oldest warmth:
"To think so thin a fancy," he exclaimed,

"As last I found you folded in, should screen
Our genuine hearts, a moment, each from each!"

The fancy thin! — I let him keep his word;
I would not argue. — Still, with care aroused
To guard some credit yet for having sense,
I hinted other truth; how I had changed, —
Not I, so much, — my thought about myself,
About my life-work; "Elbert, think of it,
That fancy thin a true phase showed of me,
A spray but on a constant sea within,
That heaves and heaves. With moods, the kind mine are,
So maddened by traditions, calmed by dreams;
Scarce happy ever till at hazard dashed
Along a course to sheer uncertainty
That keen imagination more may spy
In things material than material are,
That fancy may create all; — what am I
For life-work, now, like priesthood, sure in creeds
And sureties for the soul, whereon may lean
All weaker souls, with warrant not to bend?"

Then Elbert laughed. "But were you now a bow,
Through bending most you shot most. — Not a priest?
A man alone? — You yet a brother are
To many a soul that sails this sea of life,
Where oft the horizon trembles with the change
Of wind and wave; and oft too hale hope mourns
Fair promises, like skies that fade in fog.
A man alone? — And yet, the moods of man
May make men love us for our manliness,

Till, Christ-like through our sympathy, we draw
Toward self, God's image here, and thus toward
Him."

"But draw men how?" I cried. "Woe me, I
stand,
A poet born, who deemed his Muse had fled;
That time and trouble had a stone rolled up,
Her sweet form sealing in its sepulchre.
Yet lo! one breath of love could rouse the dead.
All day the subtle spirit haunts me now,
A medium thrilled to sound its sweetness forth."

"Well, well;" he said, "then let it sound. Rare
rest,
Were all one's recreation freshened thus;
One's slumber serenaded by the Muse."

"One's recreation! slumber!" I exclaimed;
"Is mind a deep that wells with most of thought
When void the most? I tell you naught can draw
One truthful inspiration save from truth.
Your poetry may people heaven like clouds,
All phantom shaped, and splendid as their sun;
But know, these forms above were vapors first,
Heaven drew from depths below. Thought issues
thus,
In holiday attire, with all its life,
The inertia large of philosophic force
Forced into play; the dream-land opening where
The day's task closes."

"Be it so," he said,
"The pastime of a life-work."

"Ah," I sighed,

" Too much of work brings too much sleep, — no dreams !
If one were but a harp the Muse should play,
What could he better do than toil to keep
His thought and feeling close attuned to truth :
And this took all his labor ! He who seeks
With those few cords that nature dealt to him
To string both harp and bow, may harm the one,
And may not help the other. We are men ;
With narrowed aims of men must bide content.
If, Adam-like, we would be gods, we fall.
Not given to mortal is the life supreme,
In naught unbalanced, laden light in naught,
Existence evermore at equipoise,
Complete with that which on itself depends.
Oft, who his worth would double, nothing does
Except to break the back of worth that was,
While doubled burdens fall to doubled waste.
We men should humbler be, and pray to heaven
To have horizons hanging nearer us.
Our views too broad unfit our minds for earth,
Yet fit them not for loneliness divine, —
The wild chill chaos, back behind the stars ? "

Thus would I talk, and trouble Elbert much,
For he would rouse me in his rattling way :
" Why, Norman, you are hedging all our hopes.
Do not you pity moods that dote on you ?
If, man, your metaphysics be not yet
Beyond all physics, pray you cure yourself ;
Be more material ; or material powers
Will alienated grow, or you forget,
And count you out from all their reckonings ;
And you who are of earth, shall earth own not ;

And you who would be heaven's, shall heaven
own not.
To own yourself and only own yourself,
Is worse than serfdom that has earned its smile,
Though but from wrinkling cheeks of sham good-
will."

Then, through my gloom exploring for its source,
His thought would light on Edith. He was right;
Perhaps less right, grew garrulous of Grace.
For deeming love renewed my only hope,
And, seeking this, determined it to find,
My slightest flush could furnish him a glow
As bright to light his pathway as the day.

Of course, I could deny it; could protest
I knew and owned no key, her heart to ope;
Our lips, e'en parting but to speak of love,
Infringe on Cupid, and, before they close,
Some tingling arrow of that jealous god
Will make them drop all soberness.
He laughed:
"Now say you never saw the sea for waves;
Or stars, for twinkling; or the trees, for leaves;
But tell me not, you never saw the heart
That bosom heaves; nor ever saw the play
Of faith and freak within that twinkling eye;
Nor ever saw the spirit when the smile
That breaks in laughter shakes the form aside.
Come, friend, I know you better. Say you err;
Or, by my soul, I never read you yet."

"And more," said I; "she is not my ideal."

He laughed again: "Some men who court ideals
Had first their idol; and, the false god fell'd,

Hoard then the fringe that dangled on its train ;
And spend their lives in hunting other trains
To match but forms and colors of the first.
It strikes me, friend, that all things truthful grow.
E'en love outgrows the fashion of its youth : —
The world has whirled apace ; and different hues
Surround the noonday's sun. No dawn returns.
What form or color robes the infinite ? —
Yet aught to worship matches that alone.
Look rather not for worship, but for worth.
You need a mate, friend ; not a mystery."

" A mate," I said ; " but she, all truth I prize,
My very soul, could waive ; and with a jest."

Still Elbert parried me ; " To hear you prate
Of truth — with women. Why, you tried that once,
With Edith, not so ? — and she liked it, eh ?
Herself had love for this same truth ? — What then ? —
How very strange, when, yesterday, she passed,
She craved no more of it."
" She passed ? " I cried.

" Ay, ay," he said ; " while you, so wrapped in Grace,
Walked near ; and noted nothing. How she laughed ! —
Then spoke of 'haste, such haste, she could not stop ;
And I, I must not tell you.' — Thus, you see,
I keep my word ; I promised nothing though."

I felt me flush: it but encouraged him.
"This flame of sympathy you deemed so bright,
Extinguished was; you may have thought by me.
If so, I tell you, friend, 't was lightly done.
I but outblew you; and the moral is: —
True flames, these women flicker with the wind.
But use you breath enough, their natures yield.
Yet blow for their sakes, not your own ideal's.
Man seldom finds a sweetheart here so sweet
She loves mere pining for ideal worth.
Truth is, that they the all-in-all would seem;
And so live jealous of our male ideals.
Then, too, they are creative less than we;
And so crave more the creature; love and serve
Embodied life that may be seen and felt.
You doubt me? — Test it. — Read that rhyme you wrote;
Inspired by fancy. — Say so; — still they hint,
'Ah, this was she, or she; some love-affair.'
Chance is, that Grace does slight your love of truth.
It so is better; more you seem her own."

"More like," I cried, "she holds my truth and me
More like champagne, — a thing that pops and shocks,
But yet enlivening when the hour is dull."

"And likes the shocking," said he. "Know you not
Most maids love mastery? aye the closest cling
To those who show the strength to hold them fast?
Full many a suitor, now, will win his love,

And treat her merely like some petted puss;
Caress, then cuff, until she yields at last,
Won solely through superior willfulness.
Who much defers to her, she pities him;
And names him friend, because she feels him frail.
Her favorite cavalier seems less a friend,
At first, than foe who stays the brunt in time
To seem to save her when she seems to fall."

"And ought to charge him!" cried I. "But not strange
Such onsets numb her senses, now and then!
Save earth from women trained to feel but weak,
With all experience nurtured not to think,
But schooled to passions pert of dwarfed desires,
Afraid of truth and dodging toward deceit.
Let loose in homes, one finds their thing for thought
As dry and hollow as a sounding board
Behind a tongue that, like a weather vane,
But creaks with windy scandal of the town
Till endless malice makes his ear-drum ache,
At one spot hammered sore, and o'er and o'er,
With humdrum gossip of surrounding naught.
Small profit they, to crown our courtships grand,
So prinked with flowers and flattery! Wise man;
Flowers draw the bee, and flattery the fool.
One stings; the other — laugh not, Elbert, nay,
You know it well, what friendship craves; and these,
These simpering women, testing manhood's woof
By worthless nap that tickles vanity, —
Well, I shall wait some coming woman, I,
Who need no suing since our spirits suit;
Nor ruling either. — Love shall rule us both."

"You true Pygmalion," cried he, "make a maid! —
But all maids grow to us, when wedded once;
So practical, they are, far more than men,
And yield to powers that be. Though caught, like fish,
Through bait they crave not ere men tender it,
They cling to love once offered them. Well, too,
They are not male friends. Then those homes of ours
Would hold us hardly, for our rivals there.
Accept the facts, friend; in this world of reals,
Ideals oft must yield. So look to Grace;
Despite your protests, just the match for you.
Such women's love is limitless when won.
You like her, too; now, now" —
And so we talked.
I never thought it meant much; for we talked
Of all things, almost; and, in play, at times,
Would I indulge in hopes that he were right.
Once too, far up in clouds, my fancy feigned
To ask if then her friends, or she, would wish
My calling hers to be. I scarce had thought
A whim like this could Elbert so mislead.
From time to time, I marked him much with Grace;
But naught surmised until came out, at last:

"All right, my Norman; I have talked with her;
All but to tell her why I talked with her;
And with her parents talked; and all agree,
And praise and prize a plan of life like yours.
These latter actually sigh, at last,
'If we but had a child for work like this!' —
So, friend, your way is clear."
But was it clear? —

So sure was it, that I could pluck this fruit?
If sure, so sure the Eden opened not
To tempt, as well as bless? — How could it be?
Came love for me at last? — The hope was sweet;
Yet strange! — Why strange? — The change? — seemed all change so? —
Yet marriage? — Why did mortals marry then? —
For love, was said, for love. And what was love?
What more than liking well? — Whom liked I so;
And all in all, and always? — Edith? — What? —
And liked her calling? — If I liked not that,
I liked not her; not wholly. If not her,
Then no one: this test failed. I must select —
And how do this? — Why, how, in anything? —
With judgment, surely. Grace could stand that test.
Why not be ruled by judgment? — I would try.
And surely life were sweet with one like her.

I thought; but all my thinking stirred but thought
Until, one time, I mused of other days;
How once, and at the merest hint of love,
My younger blood, like some just conquering host
That trembling hope bears on, would bound my veins
That thrilled and thrilled as shook each trodden pulse;
How, hot as deserts scorched by swift simoons,
And wild as forests filled with sudden blasts,
My frame would glow and bend at every breath
That tidings bore about the soul I loved.
Love Grace did I? — How then had love been tamed!

Mere self-control, was it, that, strong to hold,
Had broken in, at last, that bounding blood,
And held the rein to joy? — Ah, self-control,
The rest rheumatic of a zest grown old,
It came with time; but mine had come from care.
Cold self-control, the curse of northern climes,
The artful despot of the Arctic heart, —
Alas, my summer scarce had warmed me yet —
Was it to freeze me with its wintry clutch
Of colorless indifference? streaming love
To chill and check till stilled in ice-like death?

Woe me, I sighed; but then with nobler cause,
More nobly moved, I mourned that older love.
It aye had come from regions far and pure,
From sacred heights of dream-land and desire,
And trailing light like Moses' from the mount,
With one hand clasping mine, one pointing up
To something earthly, yet more near the sky.
It aye had flushed the throbbing veins it neared
With pride, yet blushing like the peasant's brow
The sovereign's hands have touched, that bears
away
Ennobled blood forever! — This though, this,
This latter mood, this sisterly regard,
So cold, so calm, so cautious, — what was this?
To call it love, my spirit could have swooned,
Shrunk like a parent's when he finds his child,
The mind he hoped would think, a gibbering
blank. —
But then, and underneath my whole despair,
With one deep sigh that loosened all my soul,
Like kisses sweet of sudden death that draws

To sudden bliss; reached too, like heavenly peace,
Through battle fields, all roar and smoke and blood,
Came hope for Edith; — and my shaken powers
Lost hold of Grace forever!
Still would doubt
Survive and ask if, always off my guard,
In fancy rampant, I had Grace deceived
As I had Elbert? Could it be, indeed,
That I, who wished it not, had won her love?
And if so, what? — The problem wore me thin;
My witless self all whittled off to point
This single question.
It was solved at last;
I dropped a chance surmise, — what one "should do,
If loving one who clearly loved him not?"

She arched her answer with so rare a blush,
At once were doubts dispelled; and, catching truth
From hers, contagious; like a boy confused,
All fused in frankness bubbling o'er the brim,
I blurted out about my older love;
To root it out would root out love itself;
Not root it out, a rival leave no place.

"Yourself you meant?" she cried, with look so changed,
My weight of shame had sunk me through the floor.
But, forced to words, like one some startling shocks,

I stammered, "Elbert," — and was shocked in truth;
For had I wrenched it from her bodily,
Scarce redder had her flushing brow repelled
My wresting rudely such a secret thence.
At one bound then, my honor had returned.
A bandit had I been, to spring apart
That casket locked; — but ah! had spied her soul! —
And back to right it brought me. "Pardon, Grace,"
I cried, then hushed: A strange and holy power,
One gush like love seemed fountained in my heart,
And showered and streamed through all my thrilling veins;
And then I checked it. Not for me was she,
Alas, unworthy! She was Elbert's — all!

"Grace, Grace," I cried, "my friend, now doubly friend;
And doubly dear, since Elbert's dearest friend;
Thank Heaven that you have loved so true a man.
I go" —
"No never, no," she pleaded it;
And urged a vow; but I who vowed took heed,
Made loose the letter for the spirit's sake; —
If Elbert loved not, then would I obey.

But Elbert, found, the whole sweet truth confessed;
With all his love for her so satisfied,
And all his sacrifice for me so clear;
I honored God the more from this, the hour
I spied His honor so encased in man.

"Yet no; for you, you brought me her," he said.
"And I no love had dreamed, before had sought
Your cause to plead. Then, aimed for what it
sought,
My will stood willful. There you know the
whole."
And soon, as if he feared our former strife
Were not yet stilled, "And you, perhaps, were
right
With Edith, too," he said; "at least, were safe.
Still hold to truth. One time, it saved us both."

And then I learned, as other friends have learned,
Who strove my joy for them, with them to share,
How much more joy was theirs, when theirs
alone; —
A truth scarce aimed my thought to turn aside
From self left lonelier now than e'er before.
I strove to all forget in work. The work
Was but a worm's that eats from day to day
The morrow's bed, at morning dragging on
A soulless trunk, through troubles void of hope.

My soul seemed roused alone with startled sighs
As Edith crossed its vision. Then my moods,
When fell again the former gloom, would grieve
To think with lives apart earth bungled so,
And souls assorted but by callings, crafts,
The dusty imprint of the things they touched.
"As well," I cried, "to judge of winds of heaven
By bogs they brush, or fogs they bear away!
We two, that so each other's hearts could trust —
Why not join hearts, and leave to them the hands?

If wiser than the earth, why act with earth?
What need that all accept the hollow tests
And senseless forms of mere society?
What need — ah me," I thought, "all need indeed,
If influence one would have in world or church. —
In church? — Must it too crucify the soul
To save appearances? the body? form?
Why Christ, He gave all these to save the soul.
It treason is, when churches join the world
And, courting smiles of bigotry appeased,
And grinning hell that holds the whole its own,
Preach up the crucifixion of the soul
To save the body, save the outward form.
A church is Christ's no more, whose creed or court
Represses truth that spirits long to live,
God's tempering there, the touch that makes man
man."

I swore it should not be, it could not be;
No life could so be cleansed, — by wringing out
The blood that fills the heart; none pure be
turned
By turning pale the blush, the beauty cast
Where fall the shadows sweet of outbound love.
Nay, nay; no slave should love be here, but free! —
Come Edith! — then I thought, but would she
come? —
Nay, not to my life. Mine must go to hers.
But this, mine could not, — could do nothing
there; —
And would not! — Whence then had my cry
sprung forth? —
If not from reason, from desire, forsooth. —
Desire for what? — for her? and as she was? —

Not so; but as she might be, — ah, but whence
Came this conceit, — this "might be"? Whence
but here,
As I could mould and hold it in myself?
Why mourned I then for what I now could own?
Why rage rebellious at the church, the world? —
Not these alone, I, I would have her change.
These all but echoed back my own idea;
And I, in heeding them, but heeded self! —
Yet self grown more than self, a greater self.
How, greater? — Ah, if God-like one man be,
Then many, joining all their partial gifts,
With wisdom broadening far and towering high,
Not human merely, but humanity's,
May not so far be from the Absolute!
The eyes of all men, they may stand for His
To watch our ways, and keep us circumspect;
While God, still more in manhood than in man,
Rules over truth in each through truth in all.
Who terms me slave then, serving fellow-men?
Through serving them, I best may serve, as well,
My godlier self! — Let general thought take
shape;
What better can incarnate sovereignty?
What, nobler deeds incite? or dreams inspire?
The soul in reverence may kneel to them;
Yield all to them. — So let my neighbors reign
And I a slave may be, yet own myself;
And deify, while I defy my pride!

Yes, friend, a new conversion; call it so.
The truth converts one oft, if he be true.
The true man loves his own, and fights for it;

And, since his own is small and God's is large,
He often fights to fall. Yet ranks above
Are thronged with heroes now, whose slender blades,
All sworn to slender causes, wielded were,
Nor sheathed, till flying shattered from their grasp;
Till truth, opposed, had proved itself too strong.
Then, when they knew themselves, and knew the truth,
And knew its mercy too, they loved the truth,
And rose to be its champions, evermore.
So now with me: rebellious though I was,
Rebellion wrought my rescue. Truth loomed large;
And Duty rose in all her royal right,
Till loyalty seemed grandeur. Work began.
Thank God, we all have heads above our hearts;
And, if we let them reason with us well,
They rule us for our rest.
What Elbert wished,
When first I crossed the sea, was more than wrought.
I brought back stores of book-lore, not alone;
But in myself a sense of others' wants;
For in my heart a wondrous wealth of love; —
Ay, wealth it was; though, like the ore in mines,
It only proved that that which lived had died.
What though my life, complete with her alone,
Seemed always rent? a weight of broken quartz
That only gleamed where it had fractured been?
That weight was wealth that sparkled back to greet
Each gleam of sunshine; friendship, cold, seemed warm

With every southern breeze that bore from far
The rumored sweetness of a voice renowned.

Yes, friendship may a treasure prove e'en dead;
If dead enough, and hearts be still alive.
These things that passed, had made me more the man
That Elbert wished, the man for all mankind: —
No special pleader for a special class
Whose grasping greed crowds out the general good; —
A man to plead for all fair rights for all;
Nor be content when tones had died away
That could but once repeat, then die away,
The echoes borne to reach that shore of truth
Where he alone had listened. These seemed worth
Words, rarely wrought as ocean shells that store
Reports unending of the ended wave.
My plans, so broadened, striving to fulfill.
I spoke and wrote; and so the years passed by,
Till aiding here and there where aid was scarce,
Anon, this cause had opened.
Then one day,
Came on a letter from our bureau's head;
Inclosed, another, sent him, so he wrote,
"By some enthusiast, a character —
A woman, and a woman too of mind;
And yet, withal, who had been strangely led,
Through doubtful ways, he thought, toward doubtful ends,
Till doubts had wrought reaction, — as in skies

Clouds coursing clouds, at last, the lightning bring
To clear them off. And now, her vision cleared,
Had found within her soul a wish to work
For this our cause. But see, I held the note,
She dwelt near by; and could I visit her?
And give my judgment?"
Well, that note, thus sent, —
Would you believe? — was Edith's. What she wrote,
Weighs love against all liking to this hour.
All thrilled with hope, yet trembling for my fate,
I spelled out all her tale: — "her sire — his aims —
And her fulfillment of them — her success —
Earth seemed a kingdom prostrate at her feet;
And she, a queen; alas, and, like a queen,
Condemned to hold a throne that rivals watched,
Each weakness spying out, to wrest away
A power that could be kept by power alone. —
How sad for woman when her hopes were based
On practice that must all her heart conceal;
That must be conquering ever or be crushed!
At first her love for art had kept her up;
And for success, and for a sister dear,
Who shared her earnings, who, while cheered the crowds,
Alas, had died, and left her all alone.
And, after that, her soul had loathed applause,
Had found her nature so belied, misjudged,
Her life the embodiment of hollow sound,
And all surroundings echoing back but sound;
Chill admiration in the place of love,
Her friends but flatterers, and herself unknown

"At last, her world so hard seemed grown, so
parched,
Without one source diffusing sympathy, —
She took no credit on her for her change;
The weakest sigh that could have heaved a breast,
A dying breast, had cracked so dry a crust —
She rose, one morning, sworn her soul to free;
That pent up love should flow in softening
streams,
And something human, ay, and heavenly too,
Be imaged in the life from which it sprang.

"And, now, for self alone she dared not work;
For she had learned that all life's purposes
Are held like glasses that a soul may use
To gather in heaven's light and flash it round
Upon its world illumined; or, not so, —
If turned on self, — to but inflame and dim
The vision it would brighten. So she now
One only purpose knew, to pledge her gifts
To those that most might need. She came
to us,
To work for aims that we so well had planned,
To lift the poor and low."
And then I rode,
As fast as trains could take me; and I wrote,
Like one intoxicated, from the inn,
"The bureau's agent here abides your wish;"
And, signing not my name, awaited thus
The summons sure to seem more sweet than life.
It came. I went.
"You?" Edith cried, "and whence?"

"From whence?" I said. "Each slightest spark of good
Flies upward straight, and heaven returns it where
It fires the most? — Were surer tinder found
Than my heart?"
"Why is this?" she asked; "the note
Miscarry? You get? Would you thwart me then? —
Whose powers could aid so much! — They wish no help
From one like me? — My heart was set on it."

"On my cause," said I. "What, and hoped you not
That, seeking it, you yet might come to me?"

"Why hope for this?" she said. — "Enough to know
My own work here I sought. — Why seek for yours?"

"Why, Edith," asked I, "are not both the same?
What parts us now? What, like myself, though you
Have learned to look on life, its vista long,
And watch yourself alone; lone would you be?
Through all these years, I, I, at least, have seen
Not you yourself — ah that too dear had been! —
But, like you, one, an apparition fair,
Within the far horizon of my hopes,
The sweet mirage before me. Now, at last,
I know those misty outlines veiled the truth,

It must have meant you, Edith, you were here ;
And we should meet. Heaven surely meant it so."

Her mien had changed ; yet calmly asked again,
" But how with Grace ? I thought " —
" Alas," I said,
" With you, your spirit throned above its love,
What were I but a traitor, wedding Grace ?
This heart was yours, your dwelling-place alone.
Nay, now I do not come to give it up,
It opens only to an owner old.
How sacred was it guarded, but for you ! —
A holy place, though there, above the shrine,
The niche was empty. Friend, has earth seemed rude ?
Some reason was there ; surely, surely, some.
We war with Providence who war with life.
We seek to mould our own existence all,
But life, best made, is mainly for us made.
Each passing circumstance, a tool of heaven,
Moves by to smooth some edge of character,
And model manhood into better shape.
Has nought been wrought with you ? Ah, idol mine,
You living image of all hope, would God,
Love's shrine, the empty niche, might stand complete ! "

Then Edith leaned her face against her hand,
And slowly came the words that seemed so dear :
" It may be, Norman, may — I know — I feel —
It must be earth, so roughly handling one,
Should round experience here for changes wise.

Yet this — it cannot be — how can it? — nay —
For me you come — and you? your voice I hear?
No echo void, oft, oft so sweet in dreams? —
Nor now to waken? — Nay I trust. You may —
'T will stray no more — take back your wanderer."

"My wanderer!" I answered, when I could;
"Ah Edith, you but wandered as the lamb;
My spotless worldling-mediator, you! —
It wandered? — yes; it crossed a threshold chill,
A proud cathedral portal; and within
Dwelt one, too wrapt in self's to gaze without.
For him those arches low were large as heaven;
And all the sweet and sunny air about,
When strained through stained and smoke-
wreathed window-panes,
Fumed red, like hell. This man, at last, spied
you.
He saw you shun him; leave him. He pursued
Out, past the doorway — ah, and found God's
light
So much more broad than walls named after
Him!"

"And Norman," said she, "think you, evermore,
Recalling you, the worldling could forget
How walls exclusive could exclude not love?
Or, love rejecting, gain from all the world,
Though brimmed with but applause, one draft so
sweet? —
But then earth held such promises, so lured;
How could I know that merely sighs there were
Could thrill me more than all its thunders could?
Ah, did I love you then, so loves he heaven

Who owns not courage yet to leave the world.
I might have left it never; but, you know,
That sister mine — Alas, why lived I left
To envy that cold tomb, all night, all day,
That held her only? — Norman, pardon me:
Such woe, such loneliness, — ah, strange was it
My soul recalled your words, — like waiting bread
Birds find the spring snows under? — Strange my lips
Should linger over these, as over sweets
Still tasted once again? — or strange, anon,
Those accents, ardent with your aims, should aim
To fire my own to ardor? or that life
Should soon force forth the light that flamed within;
And, tracing far the rays that left desire,
Find" —
"One that had you helpt, friend? is it so?"
I said; "then thanks to heaven that made us weak.
So may a mortal pair bide, each to each,
Both priest and partner; like the church, their home;
For what are churches here but chosen courts
Of One pure Spirit, moving all to love?
And, think you, writ or vestment, art or arch
Can image Him, or His domain unbound?
Nay, trust my word, we worship Him the best,
When two or three together, loving truth
And one another, thus repeat, once more,
An incarnation, imitating Christ.

"I catch it, Norman," cried she, "the ideal!
Henceforth our aim be this, — the art of life.
I saw it not before: the spirit's stage
Is broader, so much, than the stage of earth.

Comes on the soul now, actor, all divine,
At play no longer; nay but shadowing forth
A love complete that personates a God!
Who thus complete alone? Nay, hand in hand" —

"Thus," answered I; "for this the whole world waits.
It waits for love, — why say not love like ours?
When souls touch souls, they touch the springs of life;
For them the veils of sense are drawn aside,
All burned away in radiance divine,
The while their spirit's contact starts afresh
The electric flash that scores new glory here,
And lights the lines of being back to God.
Then, while existence here seems all renewed,
Far up these lines, the souls that thus commune,
Discern anon that sacred home on high,
Where boundless rest that borders boundless love
Abides in bliss of bounty absolute. —
They find that home, the source of floods of light,
That, issuing forth from white mysterious heights,
Flame down and flash and burst anon in sparks
To star the dark through all the firmament; —
That home the centre find of cycles wide
Where all the wastes of nature fuse and form,
And all the things that thought can touch take shape
Until the restless wheels of matter there,
Whirled on through road-ways worn by speeding years,
At last in fatal friction fire themselves,
And light return to light from whence it sprang.
Through all, where souls commune with central love,

They rest secure, awaiting birth or death;
The Spring to burst in blossoms blown to fall,
Or Fall to drop the seed to spring afresh.
They watch, nor fear whatever change evolve, —
The splendor grand of epochs swept to waste,
The ruin wild of times that tend to law,
The monarch mailed whose luster dims his land's,
The people's guns whose smoke would dim the throne.
What though the cloud loom up and lightning rend?
True faith would not bemoan these forms that fail;
For forms if true are formulas of love
That still is ardent to absorb them all.
Let crowd the cannon then till crack the sky,
Unroofing rage to dome content with peace.
The more convulsion shake, and fire consume,
The more of light! the more of love, set free!
The earlier comes an end to earthly days
That fret our lives with flickerings vague below
Of steadfast light in endless day above!
So comes the doom of woe. So love comes on.
So hope of glory gilds the gloom on high,
While wake the good and all the ways are bright. —
We too — come Edith. Christ will go with us;
And by-and-by the glory so shall flame
No heavens can hold the halo! — Edith come;
We join the plans above."
But hold — I rave —
I know, I know — no matter, so would you. —
But find your soul's ideal, you too would find
If common sense were reason, you would rave

Till you forgot that common sense could be —
Though I forget it not. My tale is told.
Why talk I more? I know one household now
All radiant through its mistress! Where she dwells
Contentment sweet pervades the very air,
And genial sympathy smiles on to make
The whole long year one summer of delight.

HAYDN.

THIS poem was suggested by the tale entitled "A First Love," in the "Musical Sketches" of Elize Polko. Her authority for the narrative was the historical fact that Doretta (Anne is the name that I find in the biographies) Keller had a sister beloved by Haydn, and who entered a convent. My own authority for the imagined connection indicated in the poem between the marriage of Haydn and the influence of the father and the priest, is derived from such passages as these, which may be found in every biography of the musician: "Forced to seek a lodging" (*i. e.* when a boy in Vienna), "by chance he met with a wig-maker, named Keller, who had often noticed and been delighted with the beauty of his voice at the Cathedral, and now offered him an asylum. This Haydn most gladly accepted; and Keller received him as a son. . . . . His residence here had, however, a fatal influence on his after life. . . . . Keller had two daughters; his wife and himself soon began to think of uniting the young musician to one of them; and even ventured to name the subject to Haydn. . . . . He did not forget his promise to his old friend Keller, of marrying his daughter Anne. But he soon found that she . . . . had . . . . a mania for priests and nuns. . . . . He was himself incessantly annoyed and interrupted in his studies by their clamorous conversation. . . . . At length he separated from his wife, whom, however, he always, in pecuniary concerns, treated with perfect honor." — *Biographical Dictionary of Musicians*, 2 vols., London, 1827.

Such facts, taken in connection with the well-known piety of Haydn, are a sufficient warrant, as I think, for my supposing that "priests and nuns" who so annoyed him had had something to do with drawing that member of the family whom he loved into a convent. In the poem I have endeavored to bring the personality of the musician before the mind of the reader by using the name Haydn, rather than his baptismal name, Joseph.

HAYDN.

HARK, sister! hear we not the vesper hymn?
And is it not the hymn that Haydn wrote?
May not we lift the window? Rob we God,
If, while the praise they send is passing by,
Some air, made sweeter, tarry here with us?

There, there — it dies away. — Why say men
"dies?" —
Because it lived? — Ay, ay, my body here,
Because it moves and throbs and tells of thought
And wakens thought in others, thus you know
The body lives. And music, while it sounds,
Does it not move and throb and tell of thought
And waken thought in others? — Then it dies. —
But ah, the music, it has never sinned,
Has never known a wish save that of Heaven,
And need not linger long here. Yet to eyes
That scan eternity, time cannot be
A measure gauging vital force; nay, nay:
Then heavenly lightning lived a weaker thing
Than earthly smoke. — Ah sister, I have thought
If there may rise, high up in halls of Heaven,
Sweet echoes of our earthly lives, re-lived
Yet not as here on earth, there too may rise
Of earthly music echoes just as real.

At least my Haydn's holds a life breathed in, —
His very soul. Each sound all sentient is
To make one thrill, as though a power should come
And clasp, with hands below these fleshly robes,
And touch, for once, as spirits do, the heart.
They woo one as a god might, owning heaven.

Why should I not talk so? Go bid the flowers
Keep back their perfume; then, perchance, may souls,
All sweet in bloom of love, keep back sweet words.
I love him. — Shrink not, sister. Hear you must. —
And say not I am weak. Should not I grow
Far weaker, holding in a love so strong?

For years he lived there in my father's house,
My elder brother and my lover too,
My helper, and my hero; all my youth,
Was one bright dawn about that sunny face.
Four years my senior was he; yet, withal,
So delicate in blunt and boyish ways,
So young in all things save in being kind,
He seemed more near to me. Ere it I knew,
In bud of girlhood even, he had pluck'd
My blushing love, to wear it on his heart;
And all my life took root where grew his soul.

Once I remember now our strolling far
That valley through, whose borders unannounced
Upheave to a sudden hill the church-yard low.
The time of year it was when nature seems
In mood most motherly, with every breath
Held in a mild suspense above a world

Of just born babyhood, when tiny leaves,
Like infant hands, do stretch to drain warm dews
From palpitating winds, and when small brooks
Do babble much, birds chirp, lambs bleat, and
then,
While all around is one sweet nursery,
Not strange it seems that men ape childhood too,
And lisp — ah me! — minutest syllables,
Yet still too coarse for love's ethereal sense!

As was her wont, at that time with us walked
Doretta fair, my sister, such an elf!
My pride and Haydn's pet, with merry tones
To ring, when all would wax too pensive there,
Like bells that homeward lure the wind-blown
bees,
Our flighty fancies bringing back to earth.

But Haydn liked this not, would ward it off,
And turn her chafing overcharge of nerve
From tongue to foot, with "Here, Doretta, imp!
You cannot climb the ledge," or "leap the
brook,"
Or "find the flowers;" — then bending down to
me,
"I do abhor our German prudery.
We two should walk alone, or else have four,
Or six. When two agree they make a match.
A third is but a wedge with which to split
The two apart."
And once he paused with me;
And while Doretta linger'd, hid from view,
We two sat languidly upon the turf.
"Few feel like springing," he exclaimed, "in
spring! —

And yet may be, our lives spring on like limbs
That first draw back and down, and then leap up.
To feel relaxed, perhaps, prepares one best
To leap the tests that hedge the coming year;
First action, then reaction — eh, not so? —
And think — The thing is law — The same with souls:
They stoop, then rise; they kneel, then know of heaven. —
And say, Janett, whenever comes in view
An aim sublime, to make one proud, so proud,
Say, should he not do thus?" —
"Ha!" laughed a voice;
And quick, Doretta's curls shook down a shade
Between his face and mine. She smooth'd his brow;
And with a wreath of heart's-ease crown'd it then.
"There, there, my sweet heart, be at ease," she cried.
"You take my head then for my heart," he said.
"Nay, nay," she answered, "nay — would crown them both;
Your music with your muse; your head, the home;
The mistress there, your heart."
"With all one's heart
But mistress of his head, would love gain much?"
He asked.
"Why yes — immortal fame," she said;
"Not so?"
"And do you think," he ask'd, "that this
Could set the heart at ease?" Then, musingly, —

"Well well; perhaps no hearts, if all at ease,
Can ever hold an earnest of renown.
High worth is earn'd through effort. Ease alone
May weaken life, like sweetmeats served ere meats,
To surfeit appetite before it acts."

"But look," he added, starting suddenly;
"The sun has touched the earth. See how its disk,
Red hot there, steams against the river chill!
We home must go." With this we all turned back,
Walked home together; nor a chance was given
For him to say the thing he would have said.

Yet, sister, I have lately often thought
His lips so closed, were making ready then,
When came Doretta there, to breathe to me
What might have roused, like resurrection time,
As righteously as blasts from Gabriel's trump,
Have open'd for me here a life of love.

Nay, do not bid me cease. I must confess.
It is not discontentment with my lot.
My heart, it suffocates. This feeling here,
It stifles me. I think that one might die,
Forbidden speech. Ah, friend, had you a babe,
A little puny thing that needed air,
And nursing too; and now and then a kiss,
A mother's kiss to quiet it; and arms,
Warm arms to wrap, and rock it so to sleep;
Would you deny it these? And yet there lives
A far more tender babe that God calls love;

And when He sends it, why, we mortals here, —
I would not say we grudge the kiss, the clasp, —
We grudge the little heavenling even air.
The tears will come. It makes me weep to think
Of this poor gentle babe, this heir of heaven,
So wronged because men live ashamed of it.
Ah no, not strange, earth knows but little joy
While all so little dare of love to speak.
For once (I ask no more) you must permit
That I should nurse this stranger, give it air,
Ay, aÿ, and food, if need be; let it grow.
God's child alone, I have no fear of it.

Long after that, our Haydn found no chance
With me to speak; and this, I know not why.
My father — I could never solve it why
My father aught surmised: we walked alone,
Doretta, Haydn, I — my father though
From this time seemed less trustful; not that he
Less loved his favorite, Haydn; but we both
Were still so young And he, poor man, who earned
With all his toil not much, had formed a plan;
(As one might form a rosary, stringing beads,
Then spending all his hours in counting them;)
Where hung bright hopes, but strung on flimsy thread, —
Mere lint, brushed off a worldling's flattery,
That I much wealth should wed. So, like a gem
For future pride, he locked me up in school.

And there strange faces drove my lonely thoughts
Back into memory for companionship:
And there imagination, moved anon

To fill the void love found in earth about,
Invoking fancies where it failed in facts,
Beheld an earth about that seemed bewitched.

If Haydn present had my love called forth,
Away, and thus conjured (how could I help?)
He call'd forth worship. You remember, friend,
Those heroes grand of Egypt seemed not gods
Till all were dead, and veiled from mortal eyes.
And so with Haydn, and his world it was
These never filled with glory had appeared
Till now, when shut from me. Each slightest hint
Of home, that made me think this home was his,
Made all recalled as bright as heaven itself; —
Yes, yes, though heaven so very bright must be! —
Why, even here, the past is bright; and there,
Up there, we faith shall have, such perfect faith
We cannot longer fear the future. No:
As joyous shall it loom as all the past:
And then with all things bright, behind, before,
Where could a place for gloom be? Even here,
Could gloom be found if only men had faith?

A year pass'd over me. Can I forget
That wondrous summer day that set me free?
At first, as though no soul at all I had,
A part alone I seemed of wide, wide air,
The while all things had souls. The very earth,
My fellow, seemed to breathe! its pulse to throb
Through every trembling bush! its heart to heave
Where swayed, like living lungs, the wooded hills!

And then, this great life broke in many lives,
All one through sympathy. In lieu of clouds
The gusty breeze caught up the twittering lark
And shook the laughter out his nervous sides
Till all that heard did shake, the littlest leaves
Abuzz on trees about, like bees that swarm.
Then reverence hush'd the whole, while, greeting me,
Our dear church spire appeared to mount the hill,
Our home to reach around a slow-turn'd rock, —
And all stood still with Haydn! Hot my cheek
Felt then Doretta's kiss; my father's then;
And then bewildered, as from out a dream,
At last I woke.
And what a dawn was that!
As if the sun had drawn the earth to itself,
I dwelt in central light; and heaven, high heaven —
Could feel some rays, perhaps, was touch'd by them,
At star-points in the sky, but owned no more.

Doretta had developt much: so fair,
In early flush of ripen'd maidenhood,
I did not wonder while I watched his eyes,
My Haydn's eyes, that he could crave the fruit.
And intimate they were. Right merrily
Through all the house I heard their voices chime.
But me our Haydn did not seem to know;
So quiet was he, and reserved with me.
Yet all my heart would flutter like a bird's
At his approach: my will fly up and off;
And, as if poised in air and not in me,
Leave words and ways so weak without control,
Remaining fixed as though I prized him not.

But this he little mark'd. Doretta now
Had dimm'd, perhaps, the light between us there.
Then, too, within the year, still subtler charms
Had cast their spells about him : work had come.
He needed now no more to earn his bread
By joining oft us gay wig-makers young,
Us sisters busied with our father's tasks.
The church that had dismiss'd him when from change
It could not keep that voice whose tones of yore
Had touch'd my father so that heart and house
Had both sprung open wide, a home to give
The choir-boy poor, — the church had call'd him back
To aid again, but in the orchestra,
The fresher voices of his younger mates.
With this had pupils fill'd his vacant hours;
And, far away, an organ, play'd at Mass,
Seem'd all his rest on Sundays. Thus cheer'd on,
His brighten'd prospects had renew'd the charms
Of music rivaling all things else with him.
Full often, could we watch him, listless, gaze,
Ay, even toward Doretta's voice and form;
Then turn, like one bewilder'd by a dream
Fair closing every sense to all besides,
And seek his small bare attic where anon,
For hours together, pausing not for aught,
The ringing strings within his harpsichord
Would seem to call toward form that formless force
Enrapturing so his spirit. When his moods
Would note Doretta not, nor waiting meals,
Nor sunset hues, nor moonlight at its full,
Nor solemn striking of the midnight bell,
What could I think that he could care for me.

At last his illness came. How pale he lay!
We fear'd for him, lest life should slip its net:
The fleshly cords seem'd worn to film so thin!
But how his soul would shine through them! Its light,
I would not say that it could gladden me,
Yet — strange is it? — while seated near his side,
The fresh air fanning toward him, air his lungs
Were all too weak to draw there for themselves,
For that so gentle, babelike sufferer,
I lost all fear, and true to womanhood,
I loved him more for low and helpless sighs
Than ever I had loved him for his strength.

How oft I thank'd the Power that gave me power
To think and do for him what he could not.
I knelt: I gave my body to his soul:
Brain, hands and all things would I yield to him.
And were they not paid back? — His sweet, sweet heart,
Each slightest beat of it, I felt it thrill
Through all my veins, twice dear since serving two.
And this was love! You know the Master's words,
That they alone who lose it find their life.
'T is true. No soul can feel full consciousness
Of full existence till it really love,
And yield its own to serve another's life.
"To serve Christ's," say you? — Ay, and part of that,
By Christ's humanity, is serving man.
I speak a law of life, a truth of God:
To heaven I dare as little limit it,

As here, to earth : whatever be his sphere,
One knows not life therein until he love.

True love has life eternal, infinite.
Complete within itself, and craving naught,
It needs no future far, nor outlet vast,
Nor aught to feel or touch in time or space.
A sense within, itself its own reward,
It waits not on return. For it, more blest
To love it is, than be loved ; to be God,
Than be a man.
At least, my love bless'd me
Much more than Haydn ; for with all it longed
And all it toiled, Doretta lived the one
Who seemed to best succeed in aiding him.
She more had dwelt at home, knew household ways ;
And I was but a bungler, knew them not.
And so to me was mainly left the task,
To fan him while he slept. But, when he woke,
Although his lips would move with no complaint,
Nor eyes would glance for other than myself,
I could not do for him as sister could.
For she would turn his pillow, tell him tales,
Bring books and pictures, just what pleas'd him most.
But ah, to me those patient lips and eyes
Such holy things appeared! My deeds were hush'd :
I did not dare disturb the silence there.
It could not all have been mere selfishness ;
Yet I was all content to look at him.

And my inaptitude my sister knew.
And partly since she knew what I did not,

And partly since she loved as well as I,
When once she heard him waking, she would come
And by him sit till fast asleep again;
And then, when little left for me to do,
Then only would she leave me there alone.

At times then would I lean above his couch,
And grieve to think that I could do no more;
At times would rise in thankfulness that God
Would let me do so much. A thought like this
Perhaps He bent to bless. I learned to think
That even though I might not have her art,
Doretta's art, that I at least might have
As much, perhaps, as guardian angels have,
Without our hands or voices, keeping watch
In spirit only. Still, when sister came,
The thought would come that, if those souls unseen
Could envy, sometimes they might envy men.

How hard I strove against this jealousy:
Would plead with Mary, and would kneel to Christ;
And seek the priestly father and confess
The feeling all to him. Nor would he chide
One half as much as I would chide myself.
How would he shame me that I dared to love
"A man who had not ask'd me for my love!
A man who loved my sister and not me!"—
Then bid me count my beads for hours and hours:
A week or more I slept not, counting them;
But, while my thought was fixt but on the sin,
It seem'd my sin but grew.
It grew in fact,

For ah! existence looms to greet the soul
But like a mirror, where to him that hath
Is given more anon of what he hath:
One smiles at earth, it gives him back a smile;
He frowns, it gives a frown; he looks with love,
He finds love; but with sin, and all is sin. —
Alas, that men should think one secret fault
Can hide itself. Their sin shall find them out.
Before, behind, from every quarter flash
Their moods reflected. Let them tell the tale,
Nay, let them whisper, glance, or shrug one hint
Of what they find in earth about, and lo!
In this, their tale of it, earth reads their own.

I wander much. There came a change at last.
Our charge was better; and one afternoon,
Ere scarce I knew that he awake could be,
Upon my cheeks arose a burning heat,
While, past a mist of tears that came, there dawn'd
The light that waited in his clear, blue eye.

"Janett," he murmured then, "Janett, my friend —
And what? — You weep for me? I shall not die. —
Nay, do not rise, nor call Doretta yet.
Hist, hist; — nor let her hear us. Why is this,
That you stay never with me when I wake?

"You think you 'cannot do for me'? — do what?
And have I ask'd you anything to do? —
I pray you stay; do not do anything, —

What pretty cuffs! — There, there: it still shall
lie,
The little hand: I like to look at it. —
Who said that I wish'd books, and prints, and
tales,
And bustlings all about? — Who told you this? —
Your sister? — She, a good, kind nurse has been:
And you, you too, a good, kind nurse have been.
Ah think you I have never lain awake,
Nor known the long nights you have watch'd with
me? —

"What say? — have 'done but duty'? — Say not
so.
A friend most pleases when, forgetting due,
He seems to do his pleasure; while a foe, —
Who does not shrink to feel one near enough
To freeze him with a chill though duteous touch?
Mere duty forms the body part of love:
Let love be present, and this body seems
The fitting vestment of a finer life:
Let love be absent, 't is a hideous corpse!
Janett, I crave the life, I crave the soul:
Why at me rattle then a skeleton?

"I 'mean your sister'? Why? — who named
her? — I? —
Name her, did I, as being duteous? —
'Who mean I, then'? — You little fluttering
bird!
Suppose you were some actual little bird,
How told you then whence came or whither went
The wind that ruff'd your feathers? — Do you
know,

You women always will match thoughts to things?
You chat as birds chirp, when their mates grow bright:
You love when comes a look that smiles on you.
We men are more creative. We love love,
Our own ideal long before aught real:
Our halo of young fancy circles naught
Save empty sky far off. — And yet those rays
Fit like a crown, at last, about the face
That fortune drives between our goal and us!

"Still, all may fail of truth; none fail like those
Most prone to deem themselves infallible;
None more than men who, fallible in proof,
Yet flout, when fails anon, a woman's guess. —
And your guess? — it went right. I thought of her,
Your sister. We both honor her, and much.
And yet I fear her, lest her will so strong
Should overmatch by aught your strength of will.
For God has given you your own moods, friend;
And are you not responsible for them?
And if you yield them up too readily,
Not meaning wrong, yet may you not mistake?
Our lives, remember, are not sounding-boards,
Not senseless things, resounding for a world
That nothing new can note in what we give.
If one but echo back some other's wish,
Think you God's message through his own fulfilled?
Yet, — Nay, I would not chide; I caution you.
Wit heeds a hint; 't is folly questions it.

"And so you thought I wished my pillow turned,
And books, and tales, and bustlings all about?
Does not the world, then, worry life enough, —
That one should crave that more should worry
him?
You must have thought that exercise I lacked.
Some nervous mothers — bless them! — shake
their babes.
I never deemed it wise; oh no — am sure
The friction frets the temper of the child. —
Not natural, you see: God never shakes
The ground with earthquakes when He wishes
spring.
Life from its germs is driven not, but drawn
By still, bright warmth. Janett but look at me.
Too weak am I now to be driven to life;
Nay, nay, but must be drawn. — And ah! could
tell
Where orbs there are as bright as suns could be —
Nay, do not blush nor turn that face away.
You dream, aha, that I wish sunset? — what? —
The colors come right pretty, but — there, there —

"What say? — I dare not face you now? —
Those eyes,
Too bright, are they? or loving? Love, like God,
So brightly dear is it, that lives like ours,
Poor vapory lives, mere dews before the dawn,
Dare not to face it lest we melt away? —
Then be it so. Then look, Janett, I dare!
Am I not yours? Should you not use your
own? —
Ay, darling, draw me all within yourself."

Then, while he spoke with hands there clasping
mine,
And eyes that mine had tired with so much light
Their lids, all weak, were vext to feeble tears,
Doretta came.
But startled, seeing us,
She only smiled; said, "Haydn, what! awake? —
And you, Janett? — You good have been, so good;
Nor called me; no. How very kind in you!
Why, after all, some little training thus
Might make you like, perhaps, to be a nurse, —
Or housekeeper. — To-day, how wrecked it looked,
Your room! Our father just now came from
there;
So vexed, you know."
I flushed, and thought, at least,
That she had not been kind to speak of it.
And could have told her so, but checked the
words,
And went my way; and sought my father first,
And told him what the cause had been; and then
I sought my room, and prayed that I might know
If it were best to tell my father too
Of Haydn's love; or Haydn tell of mine;
And if he loved me still, since sister's words.
If only he could know my soul in truth,
I felt that I could suffer all things then;
Could die, if so the veils about my heart
Withdrawn could be, and show him how I loved.
Alas, I did not know then, had not learn'd,
That love may more endure than even death.

The sunset brought Doretta to my room;
And she began, and chided me, and said,

"How dared you talk! and what did Haydn
say? —
He lies so ill, with fever high, so high.
He could but rave. How dared you lead him
on?
He worse may grow, — Who knows, Janett? —
may die;
And all the cause of all your nursing be! —
When will you learn to learn what you know
not?"

And then she told me such a long, sad tale,
Of how much store she placed upon his life;
And how they two had thought the self-same
things:
She knew the closest chamber in his soul,
And what key could unlock it. Last, she named
First one and then another of our friends,
Whom surely she could not love so; — no, no.

Then sighed she, "Ah Janett, had you explored
The world about, its lonely, barren wastes,
And found one little nook; and had you work'd
And till'd it well, and form'd a garden there;
And had you watch'd the plantlets grow until
All dainty bowers bent over you with shade,
All sweet with fairest buds and fondest birds,
What could you think of one who came and stript
Your life of this, the thing that so you prized? —
Alas, and think of me, if any power
Should wrest from me my Haydn, sweetest soil
Where spring all hopes that shelter lonely hours,
And make it dear for life to see and hear, —
What could I think of it? Though you, Janett,

You have not known and tired of many men.
You have not search'd, as I have, through the
world" —

"Nay, sister," said I, "I have not."
Then she —
"Quite right: and cannot yet know love, true
love.
You close at school were kept: and hard it was,
And harder still that you to-day must wait,
As I have done, — at your age too. But yet
Right love is ripe love. Life must be exposed
To sun and storm, and frost and bruising too:
The fruit grows mellow by and by alone."

"Why, dear," said I, "I think that I can love!
You know what Haydn sings, — that maids, like
flowers,
Are sweetest, pluck'd when in the bud?"
"There now,
You always will be quoting him!" she cried, —
"Because a man, ah yes, your first man-friend!
Yet, not compared by you with other men,
How know you him, what sort of man he is? —
Girls unsophisticated are like bees:
They buzz for all, and yet sip all their sweets
From the first flowery lips that open to them."

"Nay," answer'd I, "I like him not for that, —
Because a man!"
"What? — not for that?" she said:
"Aha, have shrewder plans? — I know, I know
It would be well if you, or I, could feel
That it were fixt, about our wedded life;

So many ifs and ifs, it vexes one;
It would be well if we were done with them.
Such trusting natures have we, we poor girls;
Weak parasites, at best, each tall stout man
Seems just the thing we ought to cling upon.
But, dear, I think that half these trunks give way: —
The wonder is we dare to cling at all!"

"But Haydn," said I, "Haydn" —
"As for him,"
She sigh'd, "well, he may be not trustless all;
Yet if he be or be not, how know you
Who know not human nature, nor have learn'd
To study it and thus find out the truth.
The world grows grain and chaff. Sift out the first
And cultivate, perchance some gain may come, —
So too with worldly friendship."
"But," said I,
"If you should change yourself who change your friend,
Or change but his relations to yourself,
Or, by mistake, some ill trait cultivate;
Or, some way, make a new, strange man of him?" —

"Why I should till," she said, "what pleases me;
And with what pleases me preserve my love."

"And I," replied I, "not for future gain,
For what he may become, would prize my friend;
But love the thing he is; nor wish him changed.
I would not dare disturb for aught besides

The poise of traits composing sympathy
That, as it is, so balances desire.
Ah, did I chiefly prize the possible,
Or profitable, where were present joy? —
Nay, nay, that love I which I find possess'd."

"Pray, how much can you find possess'd?" she ask'd.

"Enough to love," I said.
"What holds enough
For that?" she ask'd again.
I answer'd her, —
"Enough to make his presence seem a boon;
Enough to make his purpose a behest;
Enough to feel an impulse seeking him,
And, finding him, a consciousness of all."

"'A consciousness of all,' is vague," she said.
"I ask for reasons and you rave alone.
This very vagueness while you answer me,
It proves how immature in love you are."

"Ah dear," replied I, "higher love there is, —
A love of God, a love all worshipful;
And that love should you ask me to define,
I might an answer vaguer still give back.
The finite only can be well defined."

"The finite!" she repeated; then exclaim'd:
"Oh, worship, wish you? — well, we then must find
An idol! — there, that golden one, — there now. —
Forgive the simile. — You know his choice:

Our father's heart is set on it; besides
The baron too could fall and worship you;
So father says. Two idols could you have, —
Your home a very temple; only, dear,
Be not so backward. Give but me your chance —
These men, they all present their best to you.
You get the diamonds as if you were noon:
And I, I get the coals. — But let me touch,
They either burn or else they blacken me."

She said, then left abruptly. — Strange it was,
With what abhorrence strange I shrank from her
While speaking thus. Not selfish seemed she all,
But so insensible; and these, our tastes,
These dainty despots of desire, our tastes,
The worst of tyrants are; nor brook offense.
I well-nigh hated her. Yet minded thus,
While musing o'er her nature, all so hard —
Have not you noticed at the arsenal,
At times, when moved to mark grim helmets there,
All suddenly, upon the polish'd brass
A wondrous brightness? then, in purest depths,
Your own face hideous render'd? So with me:
Amid her harsher traits that there appeared,
Shone soon the brighter metal: out of it,
Leer'd back to greet my gaze my hideous self! —
I, I it seemed, I stood the selfish one. —
Had I regarded her, my father's wish,
The baron's choice? — I could but answer, no;
None saving Haydn.
Then I ask'd again,
Could this be true, the thing my sister said, —

Could aught so sweet as Haydn's love exude
From moods, all mushroom'd by disease? I thought
How marvelously thronged with strangest shapes
Loomed up deep halls of fancy, lighted through
By fires of fever; how, with trust complete,
Would weakness lean on all beside itself.
And soon I blamed my heart for daring there
To lure his poor, weak, crazed confession on;
And then I flush'd, and broke in passionate sobs,
To think Doretta dared to hint such things.
Three days my woes alternated, and then
I went to my confessor for relief.

"Well, child," he said, "love troubles you again?
The rest of us poor mortals here, we fret
Because we have too little of it, you
Because too much. Of course all girls are prone,
Young girls, to deem their own love great and grand;
But you, my child, find yours an elephant:
It taxes all your powers to get it food;
Yet nothing does except to tramp on you.
Now tell me, think you God it is, or man,
Who makes our earthly love so troublesome?"

"Why man," I said, "of course."
"Of course," he said;
"Then think you not it might be wise to get
Some less of man in you, and more of God? —
How fares it with your prayers?"
"But yet," I urged,
"It scarcely seems my fault, this woe of mine."

"Well, let us know," he answered, "weigh the sides:
Here, three wills; there, but one; now, which should yield?"

"Not so," I said; "There two, — my own and Haydn's;
Besides, the other three have no such love."

"No love?" he said. "Is that a Christian mood?
A modest, humble mood? — 'Have no such love!'
How test we love, my child? It seems to me
That love, like light, is tested by its rays.
Christ's crown of royalty the halo is.
Self-sacrifice marks heaven's true heraldry.
Wherever God's, the strong must serve the weak;
The mother yields her powers to bless the babe;
The man his own, for her; and Christ, for all.
Ah, child, if you were strong! had love like theirs!"

I sighed, "How can one sure be whom to serve?"

"Well, put it thus: — your own wish? or your sire's? —
How reads the decalogue?"
"But," answer'd I,
"It seems as though some higher power there were
That one should first obey, some power like God."

"Yes, child," he said, "there is, of course, the Church:

Of course, of course."
"Who is the Church?" I ask'd.
And then he laugh'd: "Who? — What a question, child! —
Why, read your prayer-book. Why, the Church, of course,
Speaks through its ministers."
"If you speak then,"
Inquired I, trembling, — "give advice to us,
Is that the last resort? — must one obey?"

"Well, that depends," he said; — "but, dear me, child,
You must not think us bears! We growl at times
In sermons, eh? — But then, dear me, dear me,
We would not eat our flock up, little lamb! —
Come," added he, "come, now; enough of this;
How fares it with your prayers?"
Soon after that,
One day, while troubled much, I chanced to meet
My Haydn, half restored, outside his room.
For once, he sat alone; and, seeing me, —
"Why friend, what accident is this?" he said:
"And tears, too, tears? — Tell now, what sullen storm
Has left such heavy drops? Did not it know
That these, so tender eyes, might droop? if droop,
What rare views they might close to some one here? —
What can have happen'd?
"Why not speak to me? —
You seem the very statue of yourself. —

Why, what has chill'd you so? — Not I? — Not
I? —
Janett, I know, if I were cold to you,
A certain rosy face with opening lips
Could come with power to bring me summer air,
Dispelling sweetly my most wintry wish,
Despite myself! — Why will you trust me not?"

And then I spoke to him. I hinted first
My moods were odd; not moods for him to mind.

"Odd," answer'd he, "I knew a family
Where all the children grew so very odd, —
Like fruit when hard to touch and sour to taste,
Not ripe nor mellow. Too much spring had they,
And not enough of summer in their home. —
I know that you are not so very odd
That you would keep apart from one you love.
And I, can I not hope that I am one?"

At these words then (how could I help myself?)
My heart-gates sprang wide open; emptied all,
The whole the priest had told me of my sin;
And how we should not talk together more.

How wild it made him! Never had I seen
One shaken so. His anger frighten'd me.
"This crafty priest," he said, "you ask'd of
God:
He answer'd you about the Church, 'of course,'
And of the Church about the priests, 'of course,'
And of the priests about himself, 'of course.'
I tell you this is cursed selfishness;
I tell you it is downright sacrilege! —

To strain the thunders of the Infinite
Down through that sieve, his windpipe, dribbling out,
'I deal the voice of God, I, I, the priest!'"

"How dare you, Haydn," cried I, "Haydn, how"—

"How dare?" he cried out, "dare? Am I a dog,
A dog or woman cringing to a man,
Because of kicks or curses?"
"Nay," I sobb'd,
"I kneel before his office, not to him."

"Poor girl," he said, "forgive me — stop — I beg —
What? can you think that I would make you weep?
Not, darling, not of you, I meant to speak,
But of the system."
"System," I replied;
"Why, Haydn, are you not a Christian, then?"

"And wherefore not?" he asked.
"Because," I said,
"You reverence not the Church."
"But not of that,"
He answer'd, "of the priests; of them I spoke."

"And yet," I said, "the priests have been ordain'd —
No reverence, you, for ministers of God?"

"Of God," he muttered, — "yes, when that they are.

I reverence the princeship; not the prince
His regal robes forsaking, and his throne,
To lower his aims and slave it with his serfs."

"What mean you now?" I asked.
"I mean that priests
Are not ordain'd to work in every sphere.
A prince dispenses, does not mine his gold.
A priest administers the truth reveal'd.
What sanctions him to mine unfathom'd depths
Of God's infinity; and bring to light
Laws not reveal'd, and govern men through them?
Your priest who tampers so with social life,
What warrant holds he, human or divine?
Whatever move him, serving thus your sire,
Or deeming gifts like those he fancies mine,
Might worthier prove, devoted to the Church,
Is he in this our final arbiter? —
Have I no judgment? — Are not you of age?
Janett, but heed me; let no power, I beg,
Avail to sunder us. Heaven hears my words.
I fear a plot to make your will so crushed,
(God save you if you yield) a merest truck
To bear some weight of meanness on to ill."

"But I," I said, I craved the priest's advice."

"He handled the occasion," answer'd he.
"I would not dare to mould another thus.
Nay, though I knew that I could model thence
The best shaped manhood of my mind's ideal.
Who knows? — My own ideal, my wisest aim,
May tempt astray; may others tempt astray.
If I be made one soul to answer for,

And make myself responsible for two,
I may be doubly damn'd. 'T is sacrilege, —
Self-will, so moved to manage other wills;
As though we men were puppets of a show,
Not spirits, restless and irresolute,
Poised on a point between the right and wrong
From which a breath may launch for heaven or hell. —
You dare submit to this impiety?"

"But," ask'd I, "ought not one to heed advice?"

"Advice?" he answer'd. "What? — is this the ground
On which these base authority? — Nay, nay,
Base where they may, their ground is willfulness,
Years since invested; not disrobed, because
Age awes revolt. Should your will yield to theirs? —
Think you God gives to strength of will the right
To say what is right? Willfulness is sin.
If one obey it, how can he be sure
That he obeys not sin?"
"They may have will,"
I said, "but you forget; the priests are wise."

"About what life?" he cried. "In other men
Experience signs the warrant for advice.
But in the priest — what knows he real of life? —
Naught, naught; and if he give you his advice
He gives you naught, or else he gives you whims; —
A bachelor teaching mothers of their babes!
Or matrons how to guide their grown-up girls!

Alas, their counsels ignorant, partial, false,
Repel toward infidelity the wise;
And half of those they tempt to follow them
Make hypocrites or hypochondriacs."

"Nay," said I firmly, "I must hear no more."

"Then have they really separated us?"
He ask'd.
And I, "What mean you?"
"Are you then
My friend or not?" he went on, mournfully.

"What is a friend?" I ask'd.
"What else," he said,
"But, in the world, where all misjudge one so,
A soul to whom one dares to speak the truth?"

"Ah, Haydn," ask'd I, "must we speak all truth?

"Why not?" he said, "is sin less sin when hid?—
Is not the penitent a sinner frank,
The hypocrite a sinner not so frank?"—

"But yet," protested I, "the truth may harm."

"How so?" he asked. "If one show naked sin,—
Who knows?—it then may shame men from the sin.
And could the naked good accomplish more?
Must not we Christians here confess our faults?
Why should we not? Has wrong such lovely smiles,

Such loving tones, that men should long for it?
The harm is in the lie that masks the sin."

"And yet," I urged, "the young? the prejudiced" —

"For their sake," said he. "wisdom may be wise
In what it screens from folly. — Yet you know
The crime of Socrates, — 'corrupting youth'?
The tale is old: this lying world hates truth.
Heed not the world. Ere that speak out and die.
Our God is great. I deem Him great enough
His truth to save without subverting ours.
The Truth is sovereign. Think it not a sham
That holds high rank because we courteous men,
Considerate men, allow it seeming rank! —
Who lies to save the truth distrusts the truth,
Dishonors self, and disesteems his God.
Who strives to save a soul thus, loses it,
In evil trusting and the evil one, —
Salvation through the devil, not through Christ!"

Then while he sat there, sat with flushing cheeks
Himself defending thus, — I, charm'd the while, —
The door flew open, and behind it stood
My father and the priest.
If they had said
But one harsh word, it had not been so sad.
But they were kind, too kind. Ah, sister dear,
Have not you felt how much more pain it gives,
This pain from kindness? Love is like the sun:
It brightens life, but yet may parch it too.

And wind may blow, and man may screen himself;
And rain may fall, and he may shelter find;
And frost may chill, and he may clothing wear;
But what can ward off sun-stroke? — Love,
Its first degree may bring fertility;
Its second barrenness. It lights; it blights.
The flames of heaven, flash'd far and spent, turn smoke
To glut the gloom of hell.
And words so kind,
(Harsh means we could have braced ourselves against)
They wrought like spells to open each approach
That caution should have guarded. "We knew not
Our own minds, poor young pair," they said. "At least,
Our love could wait: meantime, whose love could claim
Our trust, like theirs whose treasure lay in us?"

And then to me alone they spoke of Haydn: —
"He passionate had been: — how knew I now
His passion might not turn against myself?
And he had sinn'd, so sorely, sorely sinn'd: —
How could one thus profane the Church and priest?
And did my love for him suggest such words,
Or should my love hereafter sanction them,
Might not his sin prove mine? — If I should yield,
Be won by his unbridled tongue, might not
My act confirm his trust in thought uncheck'd?
And thought uncheck'd, why, like a steed uncheck'd,

Once yielded rein — allow'd but once free way,
One false association of ideas,
Ideas would still associate with the false:
There could no bridling after that be; no."

I said, "He loves much."
They, "Did not I know
How often love that lost all earthly friends,
Came back from all things outward toward itself;
And finding self, found heaven's design within?
Did not I know that loss and gain were both
Designed to add to worth of inner traits
That grow in souls as things in soil without? —
Each passing season circling round a tree
Leaves, clasping it, a ring: the ring remains.
So seasons past remain about one's soul:
And men can trace its former life far less
By tales the tongue may tell, than by the range,
The reach of light that circumscribes the mood,
Including or excluding right or wrong."

And then they added: "Might it not be found
That loss of my love was the very means
Design'd by Providence for Haydn's good?"

To this I could but say that "Love, his love,
Itself seem'd Providence, a holy thing."

They only frown'd, and said, "The prince of ill
Came often robed like angels of the light; —
Why not like love? — The only holy thing,
Such proved to be, was Christ. And what of Him
When moved by love? How great His sacrifice! —

And did I really prize this Haydn so,
Would love prompt naught in me ? "
And thus they talk'd,
Till, welcoming doubt, my faith succumbed to it.
And all the love, once making life so proud, —
The growth that I had deemed so sweet and fair,
It stung, a very thistle in my soul ;
Each breath of theirs would blow its prickles sharp,
And sow its pestering seedlets far and wide
O'er every pleasing portion of my life.

And I recall now calling out in prayer,
How long, how toilfully, how fruitlessly !
At last, despair had made me leave my beads,
And, moved as though to cool a feverish faith,
Pass out, the night air seeking. There I saw
The moon. It always soothed me with strange spells,
The moon. But now, as though all things had join'd
My peace to thwart, anon I saw this moon
Caught up behind an angry horde of clouds,
All chased by hot breath of a coming storm
That clang'd his thunder-bugle through the west.
When once the rude gust struck the moon, she tipt,
Or seemed to tip, and with a deafening peal
To spill one blinding flash. Then, where it lit,
Just in the path before me gleamed a knife !
Held o'er a form of white ! The thing to see,
I scream'd aloud. It seem'd a ghost !
My scream
Awoke no echo save Doretta's voice : —
" Janett ? — and were you frighten'd ? "

Then to this,
In part because the shock had stunn'd me much,
In part because I felt me much provoked,
But mainly since my mood was deaf to sport,
I answer'd naught. Whereat, as now I think,
Though then in that unnatural, nervous state,
My mind surmised more horrid inference,
She, stirr'd to still more mischievous caprice,
Went on to vex me more.
"What? — Fear you me!
And have you done so much against me, then?
And if you have, why fear you here a knife? —
You think the blade might draw some little
blood; —
Would that much signify? — the body pain'd?
Suppose that one should wield some subtler blade
And draw some tears, mere watery tears, weak
things; —
Would they much signify? — a soul in pain?
And did you never now do that? — draw tears? —
And think, is not the soul much worse to harm
Than is the body? — Fy! why fear a knife?
If I supposed that through a life-time long
My soul should bleed its dear strength out in
tears,
Say, would it not be mercy then to me
For one to check the longer, stronger woe
By shedding here some drops of weaker blood,
Now, once for all?"
"O dear Doretta mine,"
I cried, and still more frighten'd, "do you mean"—

"This," answer'd she, "I mean that I would cut
My body's life in two parts sooner than
My soul's life."

"Sister," I could only gasp,
"Cease — do; — put by that knife" —
"Why?" answered she; —
"For what? — Your wish? Do you so often yield
When I wish aught? — Say now what would you give?"

"Give? — Anything!" I answer'd.
"Be not rash,"
She said. "It scarcely seems your way; besides,
The light is dim. — How know you? may not ears
Be near us now to overhear? Beware! —
But pshaw!" she added, "I must go my way,
And you go yours. — Who cares what either do?"

"Doretta, nay; but stop," I cried again,
"Put by the knife! — and if you will, then I —
I will not care for Haydn" —
"You?" she laugh'd;
"Who thought, then, who? that you would care for him?
Aha! if I had wished your thought to vent,
Could I have chosen, eh? a shrewder thrust? —
Ha! ha! — to murder me, or you, or him!
It starts all madness just to tap your moods.
But go in, simpleton. The rain may wet, —
And trust the knife to me. It meant no harm
Except to this beheaded cabbage here."

And, shaking this aloft, she flitted off,
While I walk'd vaguely back, to find my room
Still sadder than before. I could not think

That my surmise was just; yet could not think
That all her strange demean was meaningless;
To this day yet, I pause and puzzle oft
That scene to ponder; then, to moods confused,
It seem'd the final blow, unsettling all.

What comes as direful as the direful night
Our spirits spend in trouble? — fill'd with fears
That sleep may bring distressful nightmares now;
And now, that morn may come before we sleep;
Until, betwixt the two, distracted quite,
Awake one dreams, and dreaming seems awake,
And evermore does weep at what he dreams,
And then does weep that he should dream no more. —
In darkest fancies all that night I lay,
A murderess, guilty of Doretta's death.

Alas! and after those so woeful hours,
More woe awaited when the morning came. —
Our Haydn's shattered frame so frail before,
All rent by throes of passion yesterday,
Once more lay prostrate in the arms of death:
So thought we all; I, ere the fact I heard,
Its shadow cold felt creeping over me.
The shutters closed, the silence everywhere,
The very coffin of our lively home,
The saddened looks, the voices all suppressed,
The kind physician met without a smile, —
I did not need to ask the cause of all.
I sought and saw my Haydn. How his face
Stared forth, a ghost's, against my sense of guilt!
For I, perhaps, had made his last thought sin:
And I, perhaps, had help'd to doom his soul.

I thought then of my father, of the priest,
What they of love had said, of genuine love,
Such love as Christ had had. I ask'd myself
If there was aught that I could sacrifice?

Ah friend, do you recall that afternoon
When first we met? How sad yet sweet it seem'd!
So many kindly sisters with me spoke,
And for me prayed; and then, at twilight dim,
When hardly any eye but God's could see,
We knelt before the altar: and I rose,
Content if like that candle on the shrine
Within my heart one light alone could burn;
Though all the earth beside might loom as dark
As those chill, shadowy chapels down the aisle.

I felt another life when walking home.
Such conflicts come but seldom; storms of spring,
Uprooting much, and wracking much the soil,
They find it frost-bound, and they leave it green. —
Alas! if grain or chaff grow then, depends
Upon the germs their rains have wrought upon.
And yet, whatever come, it seems to me
Earth's happiness is hope: and changes all
To hope will cater, bubbles though they be,
With pencils tinting all their hues, but rays
That rift them into nothing. — Yet heaven's sun
Thus tendering hints of beauty past our grasp,
May with them tender actual blessings too;
Hope's transient gleams on earth reveal the light
To be, when changing clouds of time are pass'd,
The constant brightness of eternity.

When Haydn better grew, could talk once more,
And all our prayers for him had answered been,
The kind physician urged that he and I
Be kept not all apart. My father then,
At first, demurred to this. I went to him.
"My father," said I, "do not fear for me.
If God will give our poor friend health once more
Then have I vowed that never will I take
A veil, save one that weds me to the church."

"My daughter, — what?" he cried, "you never take —
Ay, what is this you say? — you wed the church? —
In God's name, girl, explain yourself."
"A vow,"
I said, "I vowed before the virgin's shrine."

"What strange, what thoughtless deed is this?" he cried.
"You take a vow, one not to be recalled,
That you will thwart our hopes, our plans for you? —
And shut away, away from all of us,
This face, this form so cherished all these years? —
True? — Is it true? — I would not frighten you:
Poor girl, God knows that you will have enough
To shudder for. — Yet, it bewilders me:
How did you, you who had been wont to be
Confiding and considerate and calm,
How could you do a thing so rash, so mad,
So — must I say it? — disobedient,

Nor once consult me? — Tell me this, my girl: —
What false inducement could have tempted you?"

"Woe me!" I sobb'd, "I marvel'd when you said
I could do so, the time I told you here
That I would rather be a nun than be
The baron's wife."
"You dear, poor girl," he sigh'd,
"Those words were but a whiff, whiff light as breath
You blow at flies that come to trouble you.
And can it be that they? — I half believe
(My words have cursed deeds evoked before)
The very atoms of the air, like dust,
Are spawn'd with vermin-eggs! If one but speak,
But break the silence; if his breath but bear
One faintest puff from passionate heat within,
Lo, breaking open some accursed shell,
It hatches forth foul broods of venomous life
That come, blown backward by the changing wind,
To haunt him who provok'd their devilish birth!
By day they sting our eyes, and make us weep;
By night steal through unguarded gates of sense
And sting our souls in dreams! — My heart! and you? —
How could you deem those thoughtless words of mine
The voice of such deform'd design as this?"

"But father," said I, "he, the priest, your friend, —
At least, it seem'd — so thought."

"The priest!" he cried,
"Has he been meddling with your malady? —
My friend? — My friend is he no more."
"Nay, I,"
I said, "I sought his counsel; even then
He said but little."
"Little!" he rejoin'd;
"That little, all too much! Nay, never more —
Yet hold" — And here he paused. — "The
priest has power —
Yes, now I think of it, it need not all
Be darkness; no. — The priest — one clew there
is
May clear this labyrinth. — The priest, he may, —
He shall an absolution get; yes, yes,
An absolution, that shall make us right."

And then my father, in his sanguine way,
Recover'd somewhat. And he fondled me.
"I see, my girl, you love this Haydn, yes.
Why, here you stand a woman when I thought
You only were my pet, my little child. —
But do not cry: no, no; I honor you,
My little woman! — There, forgive me now;
Forgive my words. And when it comes, my girl,
The absolution, then, we then shall see,
See whether father can be kind or not."
With this he kiss'd me there. And what could
I? —
How could I tell him all his hopes were vain?
How could I think myself they all were vain?

From this time onward no one checked me more,
Attending Haydn. All the household heard

My sire "could trust his girl to be discreet;"
And something had Doretta even learned
To make her caution more than half appeased.

Then days and weeks and months pass'd quickly by
In which, when Haydn's prison'd love would start,
E'en while I heard the trembling of its bars,
I learn'd to check him, saying, gently, then,
"But not now, Haydn; nay, but we will wait."

And thus a habit grew that our two lives
Dwelt there like friends, made separate by war,
Who out from hostile camps, wave now a hand,
And now a kerchief, but who never speak.
And yet I cannot say love never spoke. —
We did not mean it; but I think that love,
May truth speak out, unconscious of the fact.
Who conscious is of God's touch moving him? —
But littlest deeds they were; yet spirits read
From signs too fine for measurements of space;
Love heeds no measurements. But hints they were;
And yet what words of love yield more than these?
They hit the sense of love, but fail of sense
Where nothing loving waits the hint to take.

This learned our souls at last; I wot not how.
And kitten-like, at play beside the hearth,
We told our secrets, and none knew of it.

How swiftly sped the hours in happy nights
When, after work, he rested there at home!

Such winning ways he had to lure my trust!
Such sweet pet names would call, to make me feel
A thing so small, he well might be its lord!
Would tease me so, anon to comfort me!
Or rouse my temper that he mild might seem;
Or tell such tales, that deep in dreams I laughed
At wit reflecting, though distorting his;
Or better still, would play for me, — such strains!
The very thought of them would seem like sleep,
While half the night I lingered still awake,
Half-conscious of the call of early birds
And sparkling spray of light dash'd o'er the dews.
At last, one night, when no one else was by,
Some new impatience seized him; and he spoke.

"Janett, my friend, allow me only once; —
And say not, now, say not we still can wait:
Have not I waited long? Janett, my own,
What forms the substance of this mystery
Whose shadow rests between us? Surely, friend,
The slightest will on your part would have power
To bid it off."
"Not so," I answered him;
(I felt that now, at last, I must explain), —
"Not if the shadow, separating, fell
From something you and I could not remove."

"That cannot be," he cried. "How can it be?
Of old your father thwarted much our love;
But lately much has done to forward it."

"And know you then," I ask'd, "what wrought
his change?"

"His wiser judgment;" answered he, "not so?"

"Are not there courses," asked I, "here, in life,
Where conscientiousness and love may cross?"

"Still," he exclaim'd, "the same old plea again! —
Your weakness is your wickedness. Why, friend,
Does not our conscience spring from consciousness?
And when now are we conscious? When unwell:
Hot, swollen blood frets limbs that feel inflamed:
A sound man lives unconscious of its flow.
And so a morbid train of foul ideas
Will vex a mind diseased. But if in health,
Its aims all true to God and self, — what call
For conscience, spirits wear but as the curb
Whereby God checks the thought that love holds not? —
If right I be, then nothing needs to cross
Pure love. It may have freedom. —
"At the best,
Our conscience forms but one small element
Of character. Enough holds all in poise;
Too much but keeps in ferment moods that work
Like brewings, sent to froth and sediment;
The froth foam'd toward the consciousness of others,
The rest sunk down in self, embittering
One's own experience."
"And yet," I said,
"Our conscience, in religion" —
"There," he cried,
"This too much conscience, overbalancing

All wiser judgment, havoc worse has wrought;
Made men crave heaven and fear for hell, so much
That, in the gap betwixt the two, was left
No charity with which to do good here
While on the earth."
"I hope that mine," I said,
"Would prompt some little good in present life.
What would you say, some day, were I a nun?"

"'Say?'" answered he, — and scorn was in the tone, —
"'Were you a nun?' — Well, if those blooming looks
Hide wormy fruit like that, I ne'er will trust
Sound health again!
"Janett, I tell you this:
The conscience of a nun is consciousness
Of mere unrest, — no more. In natures framed
Of body and of soul, the troubling cause
May be some sin that clogs the spirit's springs;
But, just as likely, thought that puzzles one;
Yes, yes, or indigestion, nerves diseased —
No trace of sin whatever; — moods cured best
By sunshine, clean clothes, larders full, good cheer."

I told him how "irreverent, unjust" —

"I might be both of these," he said, "in case
I blamed the poor souls for the life they lead.
But did I blame? — Not so; for in this world,
Between youth's immature credulity,
That can but trust in what some guardian thinks,

And manhood's faith mature that thinks for itself,
A realm there is where will is trained to act
Through doubt and danger; where the character,
First wean'd from oversight, is taught to choose.
Then, like a tottering child, it yearns to cling
To one whose greater power can for it act.
Its mood determines that to which it clings.
Some girls are giddy: — they embrace their beaus.
And some are gloomy: — they beset the priest.
He like the beaus may ply his own designs,
May take advantage of this weaker state,
And capture them for veils, if not for vice."

"But marriage is a capture, too," I said.

"If so," he said, "at least, a natural state,
Made statelier through authority of law,
That, otherwise, might authorize the wrong; —
A state to which, as not to convent life,
All social instincts prompt; may prompt the more
The more one's years. Who then can it fore-
swear? —
Think you a maid, with half her moods unform'd
At twenty, can conceive what thoughts may come
To turn or torture her at thirty-five? —

"But what, Janett, Janett, — you turning pale! —
In earnest, were you? — Had you really
thought? —
In God's name, darling, this could never be! —
Think only — Wherefore now?"
"Because," I said,
"I hoped some good to do."
"And do you deem,"

He ask'd, "The Virgin Mary did no good,
When nursing her sweet babe? Was she no saint?
And what of Christ, who ate and drank with all,
Call'd glutton and a bibber, yes, of wine? —
Was He no saint? — And think what mortals need —
To learn of life that never can be theirs?
Nay, nay, to learn of life, inspired by love,
That all can live, and all can better make.
If you a saint would be then, do not seek
For truth so sunder'd from the common thought,
For love that knows no common sympathies."

"Are some," I urged, "not called especially
To care about the aged, sick, and poor?"

"Are some not call'd," he ask'd, "especially
To care about the men they love the best? —
Or if the aged need them, need they most
The young that old have grown before their time? —
Need sick men nurses pale? — or poor men, those
Whose souls have never stored experience rich
Mined from a world the world's lords should explore? —
Nay, nay, these classes all were better served
By fresher, ruddier, wealthier helpers here. —
Who gains aught where they have them not? — The nun? —
Ah, think you veils too hastily assumed
May never change the hues and views of life,
Perverting them? — or curtain in young love,
That might have grown with truth, to die with lies? —

Alone, when those who know what they would leave
Turn calmly from the world to convent walls,
Would I restrain them not. Let such find homes,
Large, sunny, healthful halls; and dwell therein:
From thence deal forth those gentle charities
So potent dealt from out a woman's hand.
Not strange it were if sickness, tended thus,
Allured by their so loving smiles, should flush
Or blush to perfect health! if wickedness,
Beneath incrusted woes of worldly years,
Should feel the earlier faith of childhood waked
By woman's voice, and thus be born again! —
Find life within the soul renewed, as well
As in the body. Leave all good its place.
I would not thrust the woman out from this.
But rid it of its circumscribing vows."

"Of all its vows?" I asked.
"Why not?" he said.
"A vow but wrong augments, and with it woe.
One time when young I stood before a tree,
I vowed that, till an hour had passed away,
My eyes should view it not. What came of it? —
The vow in misery kept me through the hour.
And had it been a man and not a tree,
The vow had more of misery caused, not so?
And yet God never made it wrong to view
A tree or man: — the vow, it made the wrong.
And once I can remember, aiding one,
A foe, that thus I might fulfill a task
A master forced upon me. Had I served
Free choice or choice persuaded, then my will
Had ruled what outward force made slavish toil.

And had a convent this same task enjoined,
My toil had been as slavish, — not my own,
Its source or kind or object. Worth, if pure,
Must be, I think, the child of liberty."

"But Haydn," said I, "this strange convent, fill'd
With age and vowless maids — you banish thence
Christ's life, self-sacrifice."
"Why sacrifice,"
He said, "unless to yield to higher good? —
Christ's life here glorified humanity.
I must believe that souls not severed all
From earth, but in the world, yet not of it,
And in the body acting bodily,
The lives transfiguring our common lives
And common cares, the most resemble His. —
Alas, the nun who seeks to glorify,
In feigning burial to human cares,
Humiliates rather her humanity.
What else, when hinting truest womanhood
Is maidenhood? — By Eve and Mary, no!
The mother lives the model of her sex
And not the maid. — Yet see — the wife's life slurred;
The matron's rank made lower to lift her own; —
Self-sacrifice? — Why not self-glory, pray?"

"But God she serves;" I said, "and others men."

"How serves she God in doing this?" he asked.
"God made our nature. Who makes way with it,
Makes way with manhood: this is suicide.
God made the world where works His Providence

To train our life. Who leaves the world, leaves
God:
And adds damnation to the suicide."

"But if men leave the world," I said, "for this, —
To enter thus the Church, how leave they God? —
They rather go to Him."
"What is the Church?"
He asked.
"The kingdom of the Lord," I said.

"Yes, yes," he cried; "and add the Master's
words, —
'The kingdom is within you.' — Ah, if so,
I own some right to heed the voice within;
And none the right to bid my spirit bend,
A passive slave to laws outside of me?"

"O Haydn," begg'd I, "say not this. Here
speaks
The same rebellion I was wont to feel.
We must not judge for self, but reverence
The words of men ordain'd to teach the world;
The words of men so learned in the truth;
The words of councils fill'd with just such men. —
No reverence have you for authority?"

"Most common courtesy would teach me that,"
He said. "And how could common piety,
If awed before the Power above the sky,
Deny a kindred awe to power on earth.
The Church has power — and truth. I reverence
both.
The Church truth's storehouse is, and guardian.

But ah, some truths have never yet been stored!
Infinity is broad, and broad enough
For truth to grow within me and without,
In self as well as in the Church and world.
And I believe that all things God makes grow,
Unfold in ways that work in harmony.
And, when I love a soul as you I love,
Did all the priests on earth assemble here,
In front of them the pope, in front of him
A shining form put forth by them as Christ,
And tell me this pure love could lie to me,
I would not" —
"Haydn stop! — dare not!" I cried; —
"And I have pray'd to God so much, so much,
To make you more submissive."
"I submit
To God," he said; "but with my love to God.
How can I yield the godliest thing I own?"

And there he sat, so firm and yet so kind,
I could not help, — I sighed, "You make me doubt."

"Would God," he said, "I could do that for you.
Then might you have true faith. Where springs from will
One wise effect that does not follow doubt?
One choice that does not weigh alternatives?
Doubt comes with wavering of the balances
Before the heavier motive settles down.
Let those who live so sure their views are right,
Dissolve my doubt: — I dare to doubt of them
If most they walk by knowledge or by faith.
I read that Jesus answered him who prayed,

'Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief;'
That on the crucifix his soul could cry
'My God, O why hast thou forsaken me?'
And so I deem our own doubts may not doom:
Nay, rather rise like minor preludes here,
Ere that triumphant cadence, 'It is finish'd.'

"But come, Janett," he added then with warmth,
"And promise me that you will yield them up,
These sad, sad thoughts. Why, it would make of me
A very infidel! The Church destroy
Our love! What good then might it not destroy?"

A wonder is it, that to moods like this
I could not say the thing I would?
Months sped.
My time drew nigh. My vows must be fulfill'd.
I told my father of it, and he wept.
Poor man, he spent his hours alternately.
At times he urged; at times he chided me;
At times he kiss'd my cheek and look'd at me;
At times he took me by the hand, and said,
"My daughter, dear, we must defer the deed;"
At times he moan'd, "My daughter must do right."

Quite slowly dawn'd on Haydn's mind the fact,
Though not, as yet, the reason of my vow.
And all the household grew so mild with me;
And all the neighbors gazed so piteously:
If they had clothed my body in a shroud,
And I had loiter'd round it there, a ghost,
Life scarce had seemed more lonely or more chill.

But yet more sad than all it seem'd for me
To shun poor Haydn. To his attic driven,
Who knew his grief? — Alas, who knew it not?
Did ever harpsichord so crave a voice
To utter forth a cry of full despair?
Did ever aught that human hands could touch
So tremble to reveal such agony
As shook the frame of him whose fingers sought,
Along the sympathetic key-board there,
The counterpoint still pointing out his woe?

Through all those days, how heeded I each sound,
Ay, ay, or stillness in that room above!
Would hold my breath between the notes to feel
His own suspense before the impending strain
When fell, anon, his spirit's overflow.
I never so had trembled at the peals
Of thunder as beneath the chords he struck;
Nor felt my cheeks so moist by rains as there
By tears that flow'd as flow'd his melodies;
While all the air about appear'd surcharged
With dangerous force electric, touch'd alone
To flash keen suffering down from him to me.
And yet, each day, his music sweeter swell'd.
Ere then, it may have lack'd in undertone,
The pleading pathos of half-utter'd grief:
When now that music moves me, ah, it seems
As though heaven's self had been bereaved of love,
And pour'd its sad complaint on earth beneath;
And I who listen to the sweetness sent
Can never tell if I should smile or weep
To think that it has come so far below,
Or feel that it has left so much above.

One night I found my father still more sad
Than wont with him. I knelt before him then,
And "O, my father, why is this?" I ask'd.
But nothing said he. Then I question'd him:
I found the cause out. Haydn was the cause.
My father loved him so, as men love sons;
And long had hoped he might a son become.
But they had talk'd together, and had talk'd
About Doretta. "Ah," my father sighed;
"My plans for all of you are vain! —
"Why this?"
Continued he, — "why this, that now in age,
Too old to aught renew, are lost to me
My aims, my home, my hope, my happiness? —
And who has brought it on? has done such wrong
His deeds deserve it? — Here am I, myself, —
I loved you, loved you both, but planned your good:
The priest loved (so he says) the Church and you:
Doretta loved, sought only love's full fruit:
And Haydn loved, was but importunate:
And you loved, girl, was but obedient:
We all of us were loving, were we not?
Yet working outward, wisely, so we deem'd,
We all have done the thing to doom us all.
Alas what power has wrought to thwart us so?
I do believe, though long I doubted it,
There lives a devil! Hell-scorch'd hands alone
Could weave such death-black shrouds from threads so bright,
Drawn out sleek skeins of love. That spider foul,
Our sweet plans feeding on, emits this web,

To trip and trap us in like flies! — Ah me,
It may be well that one should suffer here
Until a wish bereaved shriek prayers for death;
But through what fearful pangs earth peels away
This withering flesh from off the worthier soul.
The scales about my own grow thin, how thin!
Janett and Haydn gone, and home, and hope, —
What further shred invests the love so stript! —
Is this, then, being freed from earth? — Yet look —
Where signs of heaven? — My God, I see them not."

"O, father, rave not thus," I cried. "O if —
If Haydn, — if some power I had with him." —

"Nay, daughter, nay," he said. Yet o'er his face
Flush'd hope like hues at dawn. I kiss'd his brow:
"Yes, father, I will try," and went my way.

And Haydn then, when found, appeared so sad.
"Ah," sigh'd he, "we two souls seem'd fitted so
To match each other. Here, where jars the world,
And all goes contrary, where every sun
That ripes this, withers that; and every storm
That brings refreshment here, sends deluge there,
We two, exceptions to the general rule,
Like living miracles (is love fulfill'd
A miracle indeed?) seem'd form'd to draw
The self-same tale of weal or woe from each.
I saw but last night, darling, in my dreams,

Our spirits journeying through this under gloom;
And hand in hand they walk'd; and over them,
As over limner'd seraphs, did there hang
A halo, love reflected. By its glow
The gloom about grew bright; while far away
In clearest lines, the path pass'd up and on. —
Janett, but heed me, once again, I pray,
[If ever once I prayed to God above]
Blot not this light from all my future life."

"Ah Haydn," said I, "would you have me
change?
What soul shall dwell on God's most holy hill
But he 'that sweareth to his own hurt,' yes,
'And changeth not?'"
"But yet," he said, "but yet
If you were wrong to swear? How can it be
That any purpose so unnatural
Is right? Each instinct of my soul revolts."

"Yet nature," said I, "may be all corrupt.
What is this instinct, that it should not lie?
If one should feel the instinct of the lamb
While skipping to welcome the butcher's knife
That waits to slaughter it, would he be wise
To follow such?"
"And why not?" answer'd he;
"The lamb was made that it might die for man:
It follows instinct and dies easily.
The soul was made that it might live for God:
It follows instinct and lives happily.
The cases differ thus. May not there be
Some depth, beyond the reach of mortal sight,
Within whose subtle grooves our spirits glide

Unconscious of the balancings of will?
God's Spirit lives too holy to be seen.
May not it stir, beneath all conscious powers,
A spontaneity that moves the soul
As instinct moves the body? — Ah, to me,
Love seems an instinct that impels them both."

"How so?" I ask'd, in hope to guide his thought
Toward sacrifice.
"You wish me then," he said,
"To turn philosopher for you? — I will.
This love, in morals sprung from faith in man,
And in religion from our faith in God,
Seems, in its essence, an experience
Not wholly feeling yet not wholly thought, —
Not all of body yet not all of soul,
Of what we are or what we are to be, —
But more akin to marriage, within self,
Of our two separate natures, sense and soul.
God meant them to be join'd: when wedded thus,
One rests content, the other waits in hope."

"To rest, to wait," I said to this; "and if
Such ends displaced were, would there not remain
The work that forms our earthly heritage?"

"And may not God," rejoin'd he, "grant us more
Than that which we inherit?"
I replied, —
"He rest may grant. Yet rest, the Paradise
Of work, is still the Purgatory, too,
Of indolence."
"The soul's true Paradise

Is nothing earn'd," he said. "It is a gift.
With Eden lost, insolvent for his sin,
Work, so I view it, is a loan from Hope
With which man pays the debt of Memory.
But if I reckon right, a pauper still,
He scarce can earn enough to pay them both.
So true love, as I view it, is a gift,
Our action crowning, yet not won by it;
Which, as we live not conscious how 't is earn'd,
We live not conscious how it may be lost.
Things out of consciousness are out of care.
We rest not as in death that furthers naught:
We rest as in a dream, in sleep, — a state
Wherein God watches while the soul regales.
We rest not from the healthful stir of work,
But from the slavery proportioning
Our pleasure to our pain, — a law for serfs,
But not for sons. Such rest is peaceful, hush'd,
The very church of choice, as different
From other joy as prayer may be from sport."

"And choice, does it not oft feel moved," I ask'd,
"To spurn a lesser for a greater good?
For greater good, too, may not Love on high
Displace some idol of our ignorance?" —

With this, I pictured for him brightest life;
And, like a blot on every scene, myself;
Maintained my character was not the one
Form'd most to succor his; show'd how my sire,
The priest, Doretta, all agreed in this.
And then, in contrast with myself, I sketch'd
A nature all deem'd fitted for his moods.
I may have sinn'd in it; but, grim as fate,

My father's features seem'd to urge me on:
I noted all Doretta's nobler traits;
And when I thought he now must all surmise,
And while he held his gaze against the floor,
As though he gave assent, at last I spoke
Doretta's name.
And if the solid earth
Had quaked, he had not started more. O God,
Why could I not accept his instinct then!

He look'd at me, first pale, then flush'd, then
firm;
And then with tremulous, painful breath, he
said, —
"And this device from you? from you, so pure?
So free from guile? You should have spared
me this.
That Jesuit has train'd you well! Ah, now,
I know how Adam felt that Eve could fall;
How Eve herself, when round her soul first crept
The serpent's cautious coils of smooth deceit,
To smother inch by inch. I read it now,
That tale: it stands an allegory, ay; —
That serpent means the world. The world steals
round,
Encircling childhood, trammeling it from heaven.
Not long are souls allow'd ideal life,
Not long unfetter'd sense or hearts unbound:
Our smiles grow stiffer, till, some fatal day,
The last one clutch'd, is held, a hideous grin.
Then, when the body stirs not with the soul,
The last nerve wrested from the Spirit's rule,
Naught in us left to love, the world unwinds:

Our capturer, it dissolves in mist or dust: —
For its embraces we have lost our God!"

His mood alarm'd me, yet could I protest, —
"Nay, Haydn, nay; I do not love the world: —
I long to leave it, yes, all thought of it."

"How much less worldliness is found," he asked,
"Within the Church than in the world so called? —
The prince of this world is not nice in choice
Of equipages; where he cannot check
He mounts the car of truth and grasps the rein;
And when the devil drives, he drives for home.
'The world,' what means this, but the world alone, —
The mass, devoid of mind, truth, spirit, love? —
And what, pray, has the Church? — A mass? — ay, ay.
Devoid of mind? — Why not? — But show the place
It crowds not reason out to edge in faith. —
But 'faith,' say you, 'is reasonable'? — Ay,
When there is reason in it; when the thing
In which it trusts is truth. But how the Church? —
Ah, prick the forms, and there, behind, you find —
What? — truth? — nay, nay, a priest — a man, forsooth,
Who differs from the rest of us in clothes;
Who wears the father's habits that the need
And progress of the times have cast aside. —
'Why cast aside'? — Because all moods whose range

Is girt by customs past, that could alone
Prejudge thought's present range, fit prejudice, —
And this is that behind your Church's forms. —

" 'Nay, nay;' you say? — 'The Spirit formed the forms
To fit the life?' — Ay, fit the life that was;
And life if life will grow; and that of love
Has not yet filled the scope above, about,
Of heavens that for it wait. What formed the forms
Can still be forming them. — Nay, more: find one
Wherein no Spirit works, no present life, —
The thing is hollow; and a hollow form
Is just the devil's own! He leaps inside,
But half disguised within those robes of white,
Loud chanting out that ceremonious cant
To tempt toward his hypocrisy an age
That knows too much of Christian thought, at last,
For heathen thought to tempt it.
" Judge by fruits: —
Here you — God gave you beauty — to be seen!
And grace to bless this dear, dear home. What power
Would snatch you from us? make a very hell
Of what might else be heaven? — Love, think you, love? —
Not so: a power that hates love; plays the part —
Nay, not of Christ who yielded up his life,
But — of the world that made him yield it up, —
A power that trusts in force, and force that lies.
And now that it can hold you with a vow
That but deceit could claim God drew from you,
It seizes you to plunge you down, down, down,

To feel the full damnation of belief
Conceiving this, the voice within the soul,
A lying guide; nor love to be lived out
Without foul consciousness of sin within;
To plunge you down, and hold till all the cells
Of that pure, guileless heart, are stained and steeped,
And drip but dregs of stagnant viciousness!"

"You terrify me, Haydn!" I exclaim'd.

"And you far more have done to me!" he cried.
"You were — Ah me, what were you not? — so pure,
Transparent as the mid-day atmosphere.
Should some red thunderbolt from sunlight burst
And burn all torturing blindness through my eyes,
Night came less unforetokened! I, who dream'd
That here I worshipped truth, here bent these knees
To kneel on very battlements of heaven,
I, tript thus from my dear proud confidence,
Sent reeling down to sate this foul deceit, —
A wonder is it if scared sense be jarr'd
To slip all order, — if I rave, if curse! —
You, who my heart had known; and, after that,
And after I had warn'd against the thing,
And simulating all the while such love, —
You, vowing to abjure me! more than this,
To-day with such cold-blooded, souless tact,
You, stealing here through doorways left ajar,
And entering inmost chambers of my heart,
To snare, — as though the victim of a cat
That could be played with, tricked with, kill'd, cast off, —

This love of mine that — ah you might have known
Stirred not, but just to serve you! — Well, once more,
You gain your end! Once more, your wish is mine.
How can I love? — God help me! — Go you free."

How fiercely then did Haydn's music storm!
And soon he would have left our home in haste:
My father spoke to stay him. Long they spoke;
And sometimes stormy were the words they used.
But then, at last, my father told him all, —
Why I had vow'd, that I his life might save,
And he broke down before it.
Never more
May God permit me to behold again
A broken man! Alas, how pleaded he!
He begg'd, he pray'd forgiveness o'er and o'er,
Till I well-nigh believ'd he heard me not;
And in the end sigh'd out "It might be so,
My plan be wisest; — nay, he would not yield
His stronger judgment, to fulfill my wish,
To make me happy, or my sire or me: —
Doretta surely was a housewife wise:
It seemed the older custom, thus to wed:
He young had been, had whims. — God bless us all."

Oft, after that, I urged him not to wed
Unless his heart could love. The answer came,
"This heart of mine, a heart that once loved you,
How could it love again with love like this? —
Yet what, if not? My soul was immature,

Romance weaned late. It must be manly now.
A man has breadth. I take it manly love
Is love that yields most blessing to the most.
And mine shall bless yourself, your father, her."—
And so he calmed my doubt and cheered me much.

And oft I spoke with him about the Church.
"Can I forget its holding you?" he asked.

"Ah Haydn," said I, "I remember once
When young you were, when music scarce had lured
Your soul, so thrill'd! to test its energies:
Then Gluck your master was; you follow'd him
So far beyond your own, as then you deem'd,
Flowed forth the full perfection of his strains.
And now you Gluck have passed. Yet, even now,
Still far beyond you sound those strains complete.
Ah, friend, Gluck only happened in the path,
That opened then before you. But those strains?—
Those can you reach not, Haydn, till you reach
The choirs of heaven!
"And thus, at times, I think
That I may too have happened in your path;
And this, your love, now looking toward myself,
May gaze, when I am gone, for holier things,
Ideal all."
"When you — alas," he sigh'd,
"When you are gone, then life shall all become —
I fear it much — one lonely wail for you."

"And yet a lonely wail, breathed forth," I said,
"From one with spirit sweetened, sweet may seem
To earth that hears it."
"Ah, I take the thought.
You mean my music," answer'd he. "O God,
Must love be sacrificed that art be saved? —
Redeem'd at that price, it were all too dear!"

One thing he promis'd me. I urged it much.
"In secret convent-prayers," I said to him,
"My soul must know if it should praise or plead.
A year from now, we two must meet once more.
We cannot talk together, must commune
While gazing, silent, through the cloister-bars.
And then, if wedded life afford you joy —
I doubt it not — bring with you flowers pluckt
fresh:
If not, then bring alone the wilted leaves
Of these I give you now."
Then soon had pass'd
The last vague hours that saw me part from all.
I stood before the shrine. I feel it yet: —
The organ moaning sweetly far away;
The people whispering low amid the aisles;
My heart so loud, nor hush'd in sermon-time;
The multitude with eyes so fix'd on me;
My father sad; Doretta near his side;
And Haydn's face upon his pale, pale hands.

And two months after that I saw them wed.
And, sister, I have pray'd for him long days,
And longer nights; and I have had rare hopes
My soul so faint, new strength from God had
gained.

But now my body poor, so white, so thin,
With scarce substantiality of guise
A ghost to be; — ah, what if, like a ghost,
It soon should vanish?
So I thought, to-night,
If I could tell you here, confess the fault;
My heart unload of all its sweet, sad love,
That God might give me rest. I did not, nay,
I did not mean it, to excite myself.
They told me that it death might bring; but O,
Have not I borne enough to merit life?
How had I counted time, these weeks and days,
To reach the hour we two should meet again,
And I should find how all my prayers were heard,
And heaven had made my Haydn blest. —
He came,
Last week: and, sister, what, what can it mean? —
He brought the wilted leaves —
I do not know.
I only know that I can earn no rest:
All, all our household so much else have earned!
And now, how can — I nothing more can try;
But all my path block'd up has been, block'd up.
They say such words are infidelity, —
O Christ! — and yet I can no more.
Hark! hark! —
Is that not Haydn's hymn we hear again? —
How faint it sounds! — or I, I faint may be.
The window — move me. There — look out —
those clouds —
The sunset? — Ah, what come on earth so
bright
So beautiful as clouds? — and yet no clouds
Where one could see, and always see, the heaven.

The music, hear it — hear how sweet! — Say, say,
Did I sing then? — Not so? — and only dreamed? —
I thought that music mine, and then myself;
And Haydn's heart, it beat here, beat in me, —
Ah me, so tired. — Yes: let me rest on you.
O God, for but one hour to live! — For what?
Have I not loved then? — Sister, tell him so,
Tell Haydn; thank him. — God, praise Him for it.
I did not know — yet life, it sweet has been. —
Hark! music! — Does it not come from above?

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